

Education Policy in India Since Warren Hastings

Suresh Chandra Ghosh

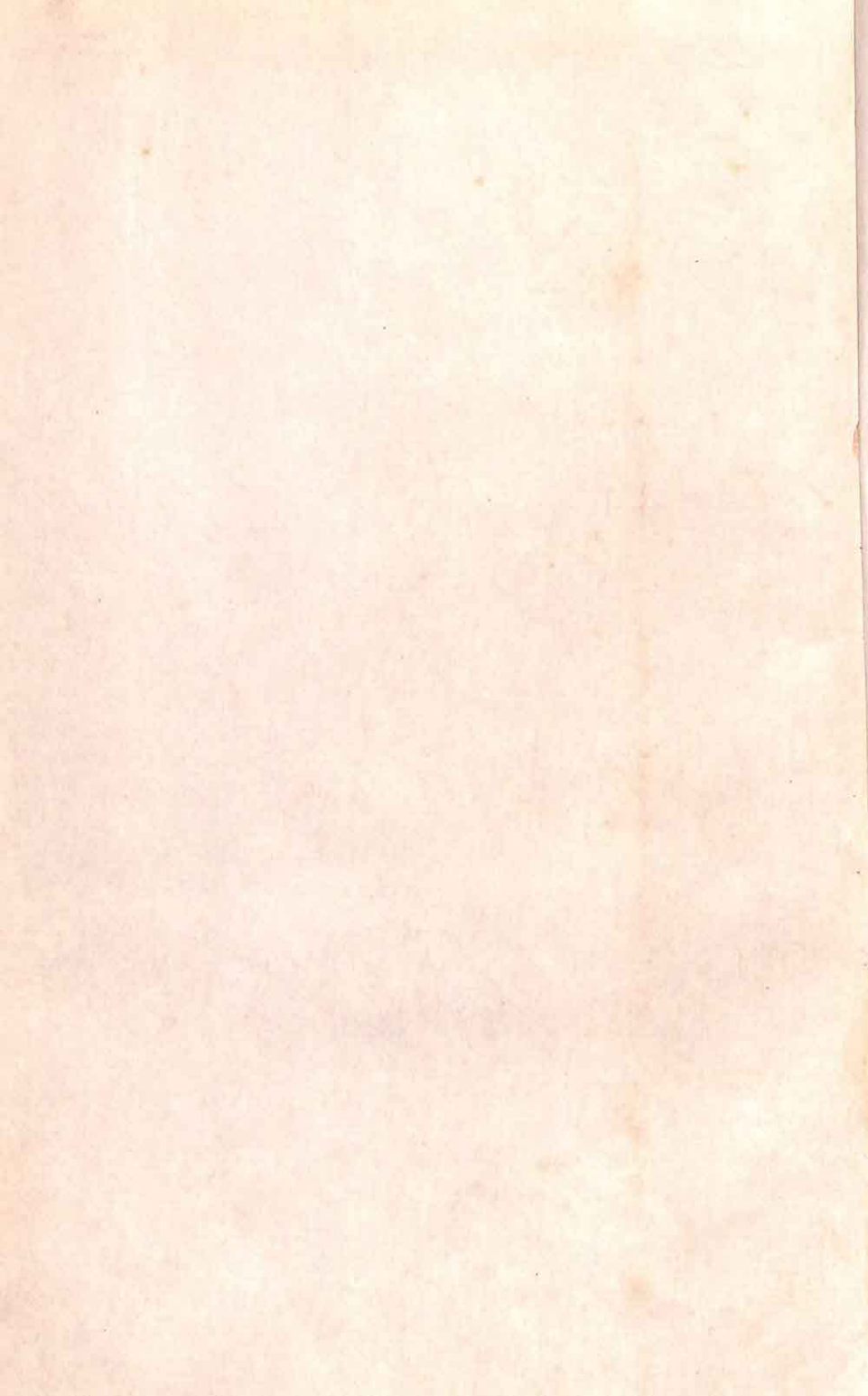
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The foundation of a modern educational system in India was laid by the Education Despatch of 1854 which represented the climax of the East India Company's education policy in India. How did this education policy of the British Raj emerge? Who was the author of the Education Despatch of 1854? How far was Dalhousie correct when he described the Education Despatch as "a mere clap-trap put forth to the House of Commons by Sir Charles Wood to filch for himself the whole credit"? What were the considerations that led Curzon, the Viceroy of India, to pass the Indian Universities Act of 1904? Did the British Raj in India take an interest in the development of education of women and girls and of a programme in technological education?—if not, why? And finally, how new is the 1986 National Policy on Education? What is its genesis and what are the prospects of its success?

These are some of the questions which represent the most controversial issues concerning education in India since Warren Hastings. Based on available source materials both in Britain and in India, the present monograph seeks an answer to them and will therefore, be useful not only for the specialists but also for all those interested in the subject of education in India.

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PREFACE

Education Policy in India Since Warren Hastings does not seek to give a chronological analysis of the subject from the beginning of the late eighteenth century to the present-day but to highlight some of the most important and controversial issues in the education policy which have not been till now conclusively discussed in any of the existing books on history of education in modern India. The present monograph comprises six essays which have been written on the different aspects of education policy in India over the past one decade. Each one of the six essays represents my original research and is based mainly upon primary sources available here and in the UK. These also include three which have been delivered at the International Conferences at Paris (1981), Oxford (1983) and Atlanta (1988) and one originally written for the December 1984 Annual Conference of the History of Education Society of Great Britain held at the Avery Hill College of Education, London. Since each of the six essays is complete in itself and is specially written for a particular conference on education policy, there is likely to be some overlapping of materials in a few of them. Nevertheless, taken together they give us an insight into many of the hitherto unknown factors responsible for the development of our education policy in the country, and it is hoped that the monograph will be useful for all—both specialists and non-specialists in education in India and will be an useful addition to our knowledge on the subject.

I am grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, for making available a grant to visit London in the summer of 1986 to recheck some of the source materials for the first three essays and to the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, for its offer to subsidise the cost of its publication. I am also grateful to my family for bearing with me during my preoccupation with the work and to Ms. Sonia Talwar for readily agreeing to retyping the essays out of which has grown the present work.

3 February 1989
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Suresh Chandra Ghosh

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Education Policy of the British Raj : 1757-1857*

The Education Policy of the British *Raj* developed through three marked stages between the battle of Plassey (1757) and the middle of the nineteenth century. The initial stage was the year which saw the transformation of the British from merchants to rulers. During this period the British were busy settling down in Bengal and elsewhere in Bombay and Madras. The battle of Plassey (1757) followed by the battle of Buxar (1764) and the grant of the *Dewani* (1765) helped the British merchants to acquire territorial interests in Bengal and by the end of 1813 they were successful in defeating their own European rivals as well as curbing the power of Indian powers like Oudh, Mysore and the Peshawar. The second stage saw the consolidation of the British power in India and during this period they also developed some interest in Indian society and tried to strip it of many of its evils. The last stage from 1836 to 1857 saw the expansion of British power as well as the introduction of many Western innovations in India : railways, electric telegraph and uniform postage.

* Revised version of the paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on History of Education at Paris, 27-30 September, 1981.

The education policy of the British *Raj* that was developed through these three stages, mentioned above, led to the foundation of an educational system in India which contributed greatly to the emergence of modern India. This is an event of immense significance which sociologists in India have recently tried to underestimate. Its contribution to the growth of Indian nationalism was tremendous and the British themselves were aware of its potentiality for the growth of such nationalism when the educational system was taking its shape in India.

One should not, however, suppose that in India there had been no educational system before the coming of the British. As a matter of fact, when the British came to India and were gradually establishing themselves in Bengal, they met such a system. For "Education is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence".¹ What was the nature of this Indian education as it existed when the British came? Indian education had always been of a classical and spiritual rather than of a practical nature. It was communicated through the sacred classical languages of the Hindus and the Muslims, namely, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. The subjects taught were the scriptures, grammar, logic and the classics which included codes of law and such scientific works as had come down to them from early times. While the Indian writers had been prolific in their production of philosophical and literary works, they had paid little attention to the development of science which, though it had made some remarkable progress in early days, had now fallen in disgrace.

How was this learning imparted? Learning among the Hindus had been the monopoly of the high, especially of the priestly castes. The learned *Brahmins* gathered students from various parts of the country and in the homely atmosphere of their *Tols* imparted knowledge. Life in those places was pure and simple. The teachers not only received no fees but provided board and lodging for their students without payment. The course of studies extended from fifteen to twenty years and the

1. F. W. Thomas, *The History and Prospect of British Education in India*, p. 1.

hours of study were quite severe. There were also larger educational establishments in the various religious centres, the most famous of which in the Ganges valley were Nadia, Tirhut and Benares. These were conducted by learned *Pandits*, who were liberally patronised by the rulers and the aristocracy and were men of high character and immense learning and lived a simple life. The Muslim seats of learning called *Madrassas* were less spiritual and were smaller in number than the Hindu seats of learning and were meant chiefly for the training of law officers. Besides law, instruction was also given in these institutions in scriptures, literature, grammar, penmanship, logic, rhetoric, natural philosophy and arithmetic and average duration of study was ten to twelve years. One interesting feature was that the Hindus could also attend those seminaries meant for the Muslims.

However, these institutions were not meant for education of an elementary kind. They were the highest seminaries of learning meant for the specialists. For primary education, there were in the villages, *Patsalas* and *Maktabas* where the *Gurus* and *Maulavis* imparted a knowledge of the three "R"s to the boys of the locality. These schools were not paying concerns and had to depend on the liberality of the people. Instruction in these schools was given in the vernaculars. The aristocracy did not send their children to these schools but preferred to educate them at home. There was no school for the education of the girls though the *Zamindars* often had their daughters educated at home. The majority of the Indians were unwilling to educate their girls on account of social prejudice and superstition, while the lower classes could not afford it.²

The attitude of the British to education when they came to Bengal was one of indifference, and this was naturally so since India was yet to be a British colony and they were not yet the representatives of the British Crown. They were the employees of a great commercial concern called the East India Company

2. For details about the state of indigenous education, see Adam's *Three Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar* edited by J. Long. A. N. Basu's edition of Adam's *Reports* appeared at Calcutta in 1941 and Joseph Di Bona's at New Delhi in 1982, under the title *One Teacher, One School*.

which was formed in 1709 to trade in the Eastern Seas and India was just a centre in the great commercial activities of the Company. The head-quarters of the Company were located at London and consisted of twenty-four Directors, who used to manage the affairs of the Company abroad. For each of the British establishments in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, they appointed a Governor. After the Regulating Act of 1773, the Governor of Calcutta was called the Governor-General and was given supervisory power over the Governors at Bombay and Madras.³ Those who came to Bengal and elsewhere in India were just teenagers of good and influential connexions, with a good hand and knowledge of commercial arithmetic and book-keeping. Since the employees were paid very lowly by the Company, they had to take to various irregularities to increase their earnings. For most of them the major concern was to make money and to enjoy it at home after retirement. Many who were able to survive the climate of Bengal, Madras and Bombay did return with a good fortune, purchased landed estates and became members of Parliament as well as of the Court of Directors and thus became an important factor in influencing the policy of the East India Company.⁴

Yet there were exceptions to this general trend. Warren Hastings who came to Bengal in 1750 developed a great love for Indo-Persian Culture. With his encouragement as Governor-General of Bengal, Nathaniel Halhed wrote *A Code of Gentoo Laws* in 1776 and Bengali grammar in 1778 and in 1779 Charles Wilkins brought out his Sanskrit grammar and Francis Gladwin *Institutes of the Emperor Akbar* in 1783.⁵ In 1781, he established the Calcutta *Madrasa* at the request of a Muslim deputation. The main object was to "qualify the sons of the Mohamadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state,

3. For details about the East India Company, see C. H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834* and P. Auber, *An Analysis of the Constitution of the East India Company*.
4. For details about the servants of the East India Company, see Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal, 1757-1800*.
5. C. E. Buckland, ed., *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, pp. 166-7, 185, 451-2.

even at that time largely monopolised by the Hindus". The institution was very popular and attracted scholars from far off places. The period of study extended over seven years and scholars received stipends. The courses included natural philosophy, Quaranic theology, law, geometry, arithmetic, logic and grammar—all on Islamic lines. The medium of instruction was Arabic. Hastings purchased a site and laid the foundation of the *Madrasa* on his own account and asked the Court of Directors to assign "the rents of one or more villages" near Calcutta as an endowment for the college. The Directors later sanctioned this and reimbursed Hastings.⁶

With the arrival of Sir William Jones at Calcutta, in September 1783, a new impulse and a new organisation was given to Indo-British Orientalism. Jones was already an accomplished Persian Scholar, whose *Grammar of the Persian Language* and translation of the Persian poets, published in 1771 and 1773, had won him a European reputation. He now applied his own enthusiasm to the organisation of scholarly effort in Bengal. But he soon realised that without "the united efforts of many" he could not achieve his ambition of knowing India "better than any other European ever knew it" (as he later said to Lord Althorp). He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in London in 1773 and he set out to create a similar learned society in Calcutta, with as its aim "enquiry into the history and antiquities, arts, sciences, and literature of Asia". Not long after his arrival in Bengal he addressed a meeting of thirty Englishmen, the *elite* of Calcutta society, in the Grand jury room of the Supreme Court, under the presidency of Robert Chambers, the Chief Justice and an old fellow of University College, Oxford. Jones asked his audience to utilise their leisure hours in learning to know Asia, "the nurse of science, the inventress of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious action, fertile in the production of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government, in the laws, manners, customs, and languages as well as in the features and complexions of men". History, science and art, he summoned

6. See Minute by the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, 17 April, 1781 in H. Sharp, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, Part I, 1781-1939*, pp. 7-10.

them to the study of all three and on 15 January, 1784 the "Asiatic Society" of Bengal was formed to pursue these aims. Warren Hastings and the members of the Supreme Council acted as patrons, Sir William Jones as President and J. H. Harington as Secretary of the Society, the foundation of humanistic study of "Man and Nature" in Bengal.⁷

The third important link in the British love for Orientalism was provided by Jonathan Duncan, Resident at Benares, who obtained in 1792 the permission of Cornwallis, the Governor-General, to establish a Sanskrit College at Benares, for preserving and cultivating the laws, literatures and scriptures of the Hindus. In this College as in the Calcutta *Madrassa*, the students were not only taught *gratis*, but were also given stipends.⁸ And finally, Wellesley set up the Fort William College at Calcutta in 1800 to train the British civilians as administrators and included in the curriculum, courses on Oriental learning and appointed *Pandits* or Oriental experts to teach them.⁹

These measures, however, did not, in any way, mark the beginning of a decided educational policy. They owed their origin to individual enterprise and were undertaken by people for the preservation of ancient Indian culture and for political and administrative reasons. The reasons were particularly true of the *Madrassa* and the Benares College which were mainly meant for the training of law officers and also for conciliating the feelings of the Hindus and the Muslims by patronising their literature and learning. And the Fort William College was mainly meant for the British civilians only.

While persons like Hastings, Jones and Duncan were attracted to the pedagogic and scholastic character of indigenous education

7. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The Social Condition of British Community in Bengal, 1757-1800*, pp. 166-7. The biographical works on Jones that now hold the field are : (1) A. J. Arberry, *Asiatic Jones*, (2) G. Cannon, *Oriental Jones* and S. N. Mukerjee, *Sir William Jones*.
8. See H. Sharp, ed., *Selections from the Educational Records, Part I*, pp. 10-13.
9. For details about the Fort William College, See C. Buchanan, ed., *The College of Fort William in Bengal*. David Kopf's *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* pays adequate attention to the role of this College in the development of Oriental learning in Bengal.

and were striving to promote it, there were among the employees of the East India Company a further group of people who were appalled at the degeneration of the Indian society. And rightly so, because there was no stable political power at the centre and the breakup of the Mughal empire had let loose all the vices of the society at random. Religion in India had sunk into the grossest form of superstition. Every stone and every tree had acquired the importance of a deity and every phenomenon of nature was taken as a manifestation of the divine will. People had begun the practice of throwing children into the sea for propitiating the gods and of swinging the devotees in iron hooks during certain religious festivals. Over-zealous devotees also practised various kinds of self-tortures such as *Dharna* in order to atone for their sins. The degenerated *Brahmins* had begun to impose their perverted interpretation of the scriptures upon the credulous simplicity of ignorant people, who looked upon their words as law which no one could contradict. Social life was degraded. Many abuses, some, of the most gruesome kind, had crept into the society. Infanticide was widely practised in Central India, especially among the Rajputs. The custom of *Sati* or self-immolation of widows was widely prevalent and was looked upon as a sacred act. Caste, once based upon the functions of individuals, had become a rigid system which kept its various branches in water-tight compartments, although the members had ceased to adhere to the functions originally assigned to them. Only the *Brahmins* had maintained their monopoly of priestly position. This had naturally led to grave abuses because it had given birth precedence over mind and had consigned to the most degraded state of existence some of the low caste people like the pariahs and untouchables, mere contact with whom was sufficient to make one lose one's caste. The aristocracy which had been hit most by the political instability, had degraded themselves to the lowest moral standard and had steeped themselves in debauchery and dissipation. *Kulinism* originally intended to maintain the purity of blood line of the higher classes had degenerated into child marriage and polygamy. Where the highest castes had sunk to such low levels, the women could not have been expected to have a better fate. Married at quite an early age they got little, if any, opportunity of

acquiring education and were kept in seclusion or *Purdah*.¹⁰

The foremost among the Company officials who attacked these abuses was Charles Grant. Grant had come to India in 1767, acquired an immense fortune, and led an hectic life till 1786 when through family mishaps and close contact with David Brown, one of the Company's Chaplains, and George Udny of the Company's Civil Service, a great change came over him. In 1790 he returned home and two years later completed his first draft of his treatise : *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly in the respect to Morals : and on the means of improving it*. He charged the Hindus with dishonesty, corruption, fraud, mutual hatred and distrust and described their customs such as *Sati* as barbarous ; the Muslims with haughtiness, perfidy, licentiousness and lawlessness and asserted that the intercourse of the two communities had led to the further debasement of both because each had imbibed the vices of the other. Grant blamed the East Indian Company for viewing those grave evils with apathy and contended that it was under no obligation to protect the creed of the Hindus which was monstrous and "subversive of the first principles of reason, morality and religion". As a remedy to all these evils, Grant suggested a "healing principle", namely, the supercession of the existing religions by Christianity, through the dissemination of the science and literature of Europe, "A key which would at once open a world of new ideas" to them. Grant stated that the long intercourse between the Indians and the Europeans in Bengal rendered it feasible to use the English language as the medium of instruction. Moreover, he said, a knowledge of the English language would immediately place the whole range of European knowledge within their reach, while translation of English books into the Indian languages would take a long time and would be less efficacious. Grant also urged the substitution of English for Persian as the official language because that would induce the Indians to learn it. He urged the establishment of English schools under teachers "of good moral character", hoping that very soon

10. See, for details, Abbe Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (ed., by Beauchamp) ; J. C. Marshman, Carey, Marshman and Ward and W. Ward, *A View of the History, Religion and Literature of the Hindus* in 2 vols.

the pupils taught in these schools would themselves become the teachers of English to their countrymen. In conclusion, he triumphantly asserted "the true cure of darkness is light. The Hindus err because they are ignorant and their errors have never been fairly laid before them".¹¹

Grant's observations were a reflex of the forces at home—one unplanned, the other purposeful—the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical Movement—setting forward new social values.¹² The Industrial Revolution created a new class of men with power and authority to set beside the old aristocratic, landowning leadership, and where the latter had depended upon inheritance in a fixed hierarchical society and had set an example of grand, even extravagant living, the new men rose by personal effort, by hard work and by frugality. A new economic order developed a new code of social values and behaviour in answer to its unspoken need.¹³ Contemporaneously, a religious revival affected England, which though it had its starting point in Vital Religion, in personal conversion, also served to promote such social virtues as frugality, sobriety and industry. Among the lower orders of society it was Methodism which inspired "the civilization, the industry and sobriety of great numbers of the labouring part of the country".¹⁴ Among the upper classes the impulse was provided by the Evangelicals and by such persons as Hannah More. They numbered in their ranks men such as Milner of Queen's College or Simeon of King's College, Cambridge, the merchant Zachary Macaulay, Wilberforce, MP for York, Henry Thronton the banker and James Stephen the lawyer,¹⁵ men of the class from which many of the Company servants were drawn. In 1793 Wilberforce and Hannah More gathered round Joseph Venn,

11. Grant wrote his *Observations* in 1792 and published it at London in 1797. The manuscript for *Observations* still exists at the India Office Library, London and is catalogued as *Mss. Eur. E. 93*.

12. See Introduction to Muriel Jaeger's *Before Victoria*, pp. ix-xi.

13. For the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution see Elie Halevy, *Histoire du Peuple Anglais au XIX Siecle*, Vol. 1, p. 242 *et seq.* and J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 84 *et seq.*

14. Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, p. 69.

15. *Ibid.*

Rector of Clapham, and were there joined by Charles Grant, by Sir John Shore, Stephen, Thornton, Macaulay and others.¹⁶ These Clamphamities were, perhaps, social conservatives in their acceptance of the order of the society, but they were radical in their determination to secure a reformation of manners and a new righteousness in the upper ranks of society.¹⁷

Grant was in touch with Wilberforce before he left for England and his earlier plan, before he wrote his *Observations* had been promotion of Christian missionary activities in India. Back home, he worked for it with greater vigour since the time for the renewal of the Company's Charter was drawing near, thus providing for an opportunity of bringing the case for the evangelisation of India before Parliament, thereby forcing the hands of the Directors. However, the idea had to be dropped when the King when apprised of the scheme was reluctant to support it chiefly in consequence of the alarming progress of the French Revolution and the proneness of the period to movements subversive of the established order of things. Wilberforce then advised Grant to produce a paper showing a plan for the diffusion of knowledge in India, rather than for the propagation of Christianity. Grant picked up the suggestion and wrote his *Observations*.¹⁸ When Henry Dundas, the President of the Board of Control, was shown the manuscript, he asked his Secretary, William Cabell, to write a note on it. Cabell emphasised the political advantages that could be derived from developing an educational policy based on Grant's *Observations*. He mentioned that a common language would draw the ruler and the ruled into closer contact, and the introduction of European education would lead to the removal of many abuses from which the people were suffering due to their "false system of beliefs and a total want of right instruction among them".¹⁹ However, when the subject was debated on the

16. R. Coupland, *Wilberforce*, pp. 202-3.

17. J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III*, pp. 353-5.

18. The best biographical account of Charles Grant is by A. T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*.

19. See *Charter and Treaties*, 1793, Vol. II, p. xi. Forty-three years later Thomas Babington Macaulay earned an eternal fame by using the same arguments as those of Grant for the introduction of English education in India.

occasion of the renewal of the Company's Charter, the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General grouped the clauses into a bill explicitly stating that the real end sought was to send missionaries and school masters to India for the ultimate conversion of Indians. And this was considered fully detrimental to the trading interests of the Company, dominated by men with long experience in India who considered any such move would result in political unrest in that country. They condemned the bill and through some of their connections in both the Houses of Parliament manoeuvred to defeat it.²⁰

In the decade that followed the Charter Act of 1793, which failed to provide for the entry of the missionaries in the British possessions in India, a new factor emerged. William Carey, a Baptist Missionary and a shoemaker by profession, had made his way to India in a Danish Ship and in 1790 with the help of George Udny had settled down in Dinajpore where he opened a free boarding school for poor children who were given instructions in Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali as well as in doctrines of Christianity. In 1799 two other missionaries came in an American ship and settled down in Serampore not far away from Calcutta, under the protection of the Danish Government. They were J. Marshman and W. Ward and were soon joined by Carey in 1800. With the help of a paper manufactory and the printing press, which soon began to receive large commissions from the Company's establishments in Bengal, they carried on their work for the dissemination of education and propagation of Christianity among the people of Bengal.²¹ In England at this time the evangelists were trying to find means of avoiding the restrictions imposed by the terms of the Charter Act of 1793, on the unrestricted passage of missionaries to India. It was customary, at this time, for the Chairman of the Court of Directors to select Chaplains for Europeans in India, and Grant and Perry who held the Chairs availed themselves of this opportunity of sending out ardent evangelists like C. Buchanan and Henry Martin. Thus a pressure for the entry of the missionaries for the diffusion of

20. J. W. Kaye, *Christianity in India*, p. 118 *et seq.* and J. C. Marshman, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 41 *et seq.*

21. J. Richter, *History of Missions in India*, p. 133 *et seq.*

knowledge was gradually building up in the colony as well as at home. There was a softening of attitude towards the missionaries as could be seen from an observation made by Sir John Shore after his retirement from the governor-generalship of Bengal : "Until our subjects there shall be animated with us by a community of religious faith, we shall never consider our dominion as secure against the effects of external attack or internal commotion".²²

As the term of the Company's Charter was due to expire in 1813, the missionaries were determined, to make this occasion another trial of strength in Parliament with the Directors. In February, 1812 a Committee had been formed consisting of Wilberforce, Grant, Thornton, Stephen and Babington to arrange an interview with the ministers on behalf of the various religious organizations in Britain. Dissension soon broke out among the missionaries themselves due to the jealousy of the Dissenters for the Church of England but Wilberforce managed to keep them together. He persuaded the Church of Scotland to take the lead of the Non-Conformists and himself with Grant interviewed Liverpool, who put them off with some vague promises. But Buckinghamshire, the President of the Board of Control, and Castlereagh appeared cold and hostile and refused to countenance any change of the existing system. The reluctance of Castlereagh and Buckinghamshire was due to the production by the Directors before the Committee of the House of Commons an imposing number of evidences against the despatch of missionaries to India by important people who had long experience of India and stood quite high in the estimation of their countrymen. All emphasised the unfavourable political consequences that would follow the episcopal establishment in India. Malcolm, for example, while admitting the blessings which Christianity would bestow on Indians warned the Committee that its introduction into India would have the most dangerous consequences for the stability of the empire which depended on the "general division of the great communities and their sub-division into various castes and tribes" because all these elements would be united in a general

22. Charles John Shore, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of John, Lord Teignmouth*, Vol. II, p. 115.

opposition to any scheme which they might think would lead to their conversion.²³

It was at this stage that Zachary Macaulay, encouraged by Wilberforce, organised a campaign calling on the missionary bodies to send petitions to Parliament for the unrestrained despatch of missionaries to India and between February and June 1813 no less than 837 petitions were presented. This extraordinary effort produced almost immediate effect. Liverpool and Buckinghamshire told Wilberforce that they were willing to establish a bishopric in India and to authorise the Board of Control to grant licenses to missionaries to proceed to India. In the House of Lords, the missionary question was not discussed at all and none took the slightest notice of the vast body of the evidences which the Directors of the East India Company had produced against them.²⁴ The new Act, renewing the Company's privileges, for a further period of twenty years, was passed on 21 July, 1813. An episcopate with archdeacons was set up in India and the Board of Control was authorised to grant licenses to missionaries to proceed there. The question of disseminating education among Indians was also taken into consideration and a clause to this effect was introduced in Parliament by a former Advocate-General in Calcutta and was passed after a slight modification. This clause (43rd) empowered the Governor-General to appropriate "a sum of not less than one lac of rupees" in each year out of "the surplus territorial revenues" for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.²⁵

While it was clear from the debates that by sciences it was meant Western sciences, the clause was otherwise quite vague. It was not clear what would be the maximum amount of expenditure on education and how to ascertain it in the absence of a proper financial machinery the surplus in the territorial revenues.

23. Minutes of Evidence regarding the renewal of the Charter in 1813. House of Lords, Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, Chapter XV.

24. C. H. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 188 fn.

25. H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Since the Governor-General was the administrative head of the Presidency of Fort William only, the whole of the grant was likely to be appropriated for Bengal only. Yet the clause was important, in spite of its vagueness, laying down for the first time that the dissemination of education among the people should be one of the tasks of the British *Raj* in India. It assumed more importance when one remembers that in those days education was not a State responsibility in England, and except Scotland, no public money was spent on elementary education, which was left mostly to charity schools, village dames, to private Sunday schools movement started by Robert Raikes and private efforts of individual like Hannah More.

II

Two new factors appeared on the scene now and together they exerted the most profound influence in shaping the education policy of the British *Raj*. These were the utilitarians and the enlightened Indians.

The second and the third decades of the nineteenth century were the heydays of utilitarianism in England. In 1818, Sir Francis Burdett, when at the zenith of his patriotism, applied to Bentham for assistance in framing a series of resolutions, embracing the principles of radical reform which he wanted to place before the House of Commons. His resolutions were defeated but since that time Burdett became the spokesman of Bentham in and outside Parliament. And, as Bowring observes : "Benthamism had in like manner been quickly carried off by less prominent characters and deposited unnoticed in the public mind, there to strike root. He [Bentham] co-operated with the enemies of slavery in every land, with the humanizers of the penal codes, with the advocates of universal education. In his intellectual armoury were stored up implements fitted for the purpose of them all, and every man was welcome to take and use".²⁶ Young states that "in discipleship or reaction no young mind of the thirties could escape their [the utilitarians] influence. Bentham's alliance with James Mill, Mill's friendship with Malthus and Ricardo, had created a party, almost a sect, with formularies as

26. J. Bowring, ed., *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, Vol. 1, pp. XIV-V.

compact as the Evangelical theology and conclusions no less exorable".²⁷

It was a number of young men who, just growing up into active employment, became the most efficient agents in the realization of Bentham's principles and this included many among those now sent out to India in the employ of the East India Company. Secondly, it was James Mill, the faithful lieutenant of Jeremy Bentham who questioned the values of the Indian society²⁸ and disagreed with Hastings, Jones, Wilkins and Wilson in their admiration of these in his *History of British India* which he undertook in 1805 and finished in 1817.²⁹ The work obtained for him not only his reputation as a historian but also an appointment in the East India House as well as of his more famous son, John Stuart Mill later, which led to the establishment of utilitarian influence there on Indian affairs. James Mill found nothing to praise in the Indian institutions, nothing to admire in the values of the Indian society and religion and saw almost nothing which appeared to him worth preserving. He considered Indian society to be static and stagnant. And so he suggested its reform on the Benthamite principles and pointed out that the key to progress lay in the introduction of Western science and knowledge.

Secondly, a certain section of educated and liberally minded Indians, through their long intercourse with the Europeans in Calcutta had realised the futility of pursuing a system of exclusively classical education and the great possibilities which a knowledge of the language and literature of the West afforded. Hence, they were anxious for the diffusion of European education and the English language among their countrymen. Of these the most prominent was Ram Mohan Roy, a retired Revenue Officer of the Company. Born in 1774 of an aristocratic and well-to-do Hindu family of West Bengal. Ram Mohan had, early in life, developed a profound detestation for the heathenism and gross

27. G. M. Young, *Victorian England*, p. 8.

28. Elie Halevy, *La Formation Du Radicalisme Philosophique*, Vol. II, p. 286.

29. Professor Eric Stokes incorrectly states in his preface to *English Utilitarians and India* that James Mill undertook his *History of British India* in 1808 and finished it in 1819. In fact he undertook the work before 1808 and published it at London in 3 Vols. in 1817. The British Museum possesses a copy of this publication in 1817.

superstition into which the Hindu religion had degenerated. When he was only 16 years old, he had written a pamphlet denouncing the existing form of religion which had resulted in his expulsion from home. Though temporarily reconciled to his family later, he could never accustom himself to the existing customs of the society. He, therefore, devoted himself to the study of the different languages of Asia and Europe and the scriptures of different religious system, in order to discover the "True Religion". Those studies, along with his close connection with the Europeans and especially the missionaries, as well as persecution by his fellow religionists, ultimately led to his severance from the orthodox fold ; and thenceforth he devoted himself to the preaching of Vedic Monotheism.³⁰ He was thus admirably suited, not only to lead the advanced sections of the Indians but also to act as the intermediary between them and those Europeans like David Hare, a watch-maker by profession who had come to India in 1800 and was solicitous of the well being of the Indians.³¹ What helped Ram Mohan Roy and David Hare to advance the cause of Western education was the growing demand among the young Indians of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras for learning English since a knowledge of the language was often helpful in landing a job in the growing British establishments, both official and non-official, in India. In 1815, Roy and Hare drew up a plan for an English institution at Calcutta and though Roy had to withdraw at the last stage because of the opposition of the orthodox Hindus to his professed religion, the school was opened on 20 January, 1817, with 20 scholars receiving tuition in English, Bengali and Persian. Howell truly remarks that "the foundation of this college marks an important era in the history of education in India, the first spontaneous desire manifested by the natives in the country for instruction in English and the literature of Europe".³² This was followed by the creation, through the

30. Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahma Samaj at Calcutta in 1828. The best biographical work on Roy which still holds the field, despite the appearance of many similar works on the subject, is by Sophia Dobson Collet, *Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohan Roy*.

31. For David Hare, see P. C. Mitra, *Life of David Hare*.

32. A. Howell, *Education in British India prior to 1854 and in 1870-1*, p. 9.

combined efforts of the Indians, Europeans and the missionaries who since the permission obtained in 1813 had been diligently carrying on the work of educating Indians in order to facilitate the introduction of Christianity, of the Calcutta School Book Society and in 1819 Calcutta School Society. The former was to promote "the moral and intellectual improvement of the Natives by diffusion among them of useful elementary knowledge" and the latter to open schools in Calcutta and its vicinity and to prepare teachers for the improvement of the indigenous schools.

As per the clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, the British *Raj* was to spend Rs. 1 lakh for education for the people of India out of a surplus revenue only. That surplus was available only in 1823. A General Committee of Public Instruction was formed and the money was placed at its disposal for expenditure on education. Since the Committee consisting of ten members were largely dominated by persons with great admiration for Sanskrit and Arabic literature,³³ they spent it on the revival of Oriental learning and institutions only and soon their activities in this regard were opposed. In December, 1823, Rammohan Roy submitted a memorial to the Governor-General urging that the proposals for establishing a Sanskrit College at Calcutta should be abandoned and Government should "promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction : embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with accessory, books, instruments and other apparatus".³⁴ A still more formidable attack on the Committee's work came from the Court of Directors themselves. In a despatch of 18 February, 1824, which bore Mill's stamp, they wrote "We apprehend that the plan of the institutions to the improvement of which our attention is now directed was originally and fundamentally erroneous. The great end should not have been to teach Hindu learning, but useful learning....In professing, on the other hand, to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindu or mere Mohamedan literature, you bound

33. H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 53 et seq.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 98 et seq.

yourselves to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous and a small remained indeed in which utility was in any way concerned".³⁵

The Committee, in close touch with the majority of public opinion and the view of the *Pandits*, hesitated to embark on so large a measure of innovation and in a letter of 18 August, 1824 informed the Governor-General that the Hindus and Muslims still had "vigorous prejudices" against European learning, that Oriental literature was not to be summarily condemned and that it had a utility of its own, that the use of a classical language as a medium of instruction was unavoidable, that there were neither books nor teachers available just then to impart instruction in European sciences through such a medium, that the Committee was concentrating on the preparation of such books and the training of such teachers, and that, ere long the Directors' instructions would be fully compiled with.³⁶

Before long the Committee was split on its policy towards classical education. Many old members had either retired or died and their places were now taken up by newcomers imbued with the utilitarian philosophy. They began to oppose the work of the Committee so much so that there were often "recurring and inconvenient" discussions at meetings without any decisions. They looked upon Macaulay, who had come to Bengal as the Law Member of the Governor's General Council in 1834 and was also appointed for his known intellectual attainments the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction, for support. Macaulay, whose interest in consolidating the British Empire by the propagation of English laws and English culture began quite early in his life, grew up, being the son of Zachary Macaulay, in the circle of the Clapham Evangelists. However, Macaulay did not take part in the controversy of the Committee but, when the Orientalists as well as the Anglicists decided to place all papers before the Governor-General for a decision, occasioned by the failure of the General Committee of Public Instruction to come to a decision on the question of the future

35. H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 91 *et seq.*

36. *Ibid.*, p. 93 *et seq.*

education policy of the government,³⁷ he drew up a long and elaborate minute championing the cause of English education on 2 February, 1835. In that minute Macaulay repeated the arguments advanced by Charles Grant several decades ago, though, without mentioning him. He castigated the Oriental education by saying that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" and indicated the political significance of introducing Western education for the growing empire of the British in India : "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect".³⁸ Macaulay forwarded all the papers including his minute to the Governor-General Bentinck for a decision about the education policy of the Government.

Bentinck, like Macaulay, was a utilitarian. In a farewell dinner at Grole's house, just on the eve of his departure for India as Governor-General in December, 1827, he had said to James Mill : "I am going to British India but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you, that will be Governor-General".³⁹ In India Bentinck's Governor-Generalship coincided with a period of intense reforming activity in England. A man of great energy and vigour, he utilised the long period of peace enjoyed by his government in tackling every problem that his administration faced in India—he was the person who made *sati* illegal in 1829 and took steps to stop other social evils like *thugi* and infanticide. He openly encouraged Alexander Duff when the latter started his school in Calcutta in 1830, which later become well-known as the Scottish Church College. And when the educational controversy was referred to him in February 1835 by the General Committee of Public Instruction, he had already taken two important decisions in January, 1835—the first was the decision to establish a Medical College at Calcutta for the teaching of Medicine and

37. It was the question of converting the Calcutta Madrasa into an institution of Western learning as well as of re-organising the Agra College on the model of the Hindu College at Calcutta that led to this discussion.

38. H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 107 *et seq.*

39. Quoted in J. Bowring, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 576-7.

Surgery according to the European system through English, and the second was the appointment of William Adam, the Baptist Missionary, to report on the state of vernacular education in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. These two steps taken by Bentinck were significant in as much as they showed that Bentinck's government was determined to adopt the policy of diffusing European learning with vernacular education as against the hitherto pursued policy of disseminating higher classical education only.

The decision that Bentinck took was not, therefore, an unexpected one. After consulting all the papers, he decided on 7 March, 1835, that "the object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone".⁴⁰ Since Bentinck took this decision almost within a month after receiving the papers from the General Committee of Public Instruction, it was clear that the Governor-General did not have the necessary time to obtain the required sanction from the Court of Directors in those early days of steamship navigation when a despatch from Calcutta used to take 5 to 6 months to reach London. This simple fact does not need the scholarship of a Spear⁴¹ or a Ballhatchet⁴² to prove or disprove that Bentinck acted without the authority of the East India Company in London.

Also, given before us the image of Bentinck that has emerged through recent researches as a true child of his age, it does not look plausible that Bentinck took the decision without reading Macaulay's Minute and was motivated solely by Macaulay's threat to resign as Arthur Mayhew,⁴³ writing about the subject more than hundred years later; would have us believe. This decision of Bentinck's, while cutting at the financial root of Oriental learning paved the way not only for the emergence of the English as the most important and powerful language but also

40. H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 130-1.

41. T.G.P. Spear, "Bentinck and Education" in the *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 6, pp. 78-104.

42. K. A. Ballhatchet, "The Home Government and Bentinck's Educational Policy" in *ibid.*, pp. 224-9.

43. A. Mayhew, *The Education of India*, p. 18.

indirectly provided for the development of vernacular education which the missionaries were popularising with English in the schools they had been setting up since 1813 for the propagation of Christianity among the Indians.

III

In the final phase of the formation of an education policy of the British *Raj*, all the factors discussed above, particularly, the missionaries, the utilitarians and the Indians worked vigorously. One important factor which helped emerge a definite and systematic education policy of the British *Raj* was the attitude of Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, between 1848-1856, towards education. When Dalhousie came to India, English education was extremely popular among the younger generation of the cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. English was not only the language of the ruling class but a sure passport to a job in the administration, at least, in its lower grades. The demand for higher education was so great that in Bangal it had led F. J. Mouat, Secretary to the newly reconstituted General Committee of Public Instruction as the Council of Education, to submit a plan for university education in India in 1845 to the Court of Directors which declined to sanction it. At the same time great official experiment on vernacular education was going on at least in the North-Western Provinces where its Lieutenant-Governor, James Thomason had introduced vernacular education by means of *Tehsildaree* schools with *Pergunnah* and district visitors and with a Visitor-General to direct the whole system.

Dalhousie's attention to education was drawn when he was asked to sanction the scheme of vernacular education of Thomason, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces. He sanctioned it and when he found how beneficial it was for the people of the North-Western Provinces, he extended it to the Presidency of Bengal where an earlier scheme for a vernacular education had ended in a failure as well as to the Punjab, the newly acquired British territory beyond the *Jamuna*. He also reformed the *Calcutta Madrassa* and the Hindu College which grew out of the Hindu School set up at Calcutta in 1817. While he suggested that the senior division of the *Madrassa* should be known as the Arabic College, that of the Hindu College should be



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developed into a new college at Calcutta by the government and a fitting edifice should be built for it. The institution should be named "The Presidency College" in order to distinguish it by name from all other local and private institutions and should be thrown open to all youths of every caste, class or creed and fondly hoped that this institution "will expand itself into something approaching to the dignity and proportions of an Indian University". Again, to meet the great demand of engineers in the Department of Public Works, Dalhousie had planned to introduce technical education on the model of the Civil Engineering College set up by Thomason at Roorkee with Lieutenant R. Maclagan as its Principal. He was also the first Governor-General to extend official support to female education in Bengal by taking over the school Bethune had set up at Calcutta after his death. Finally, he had accepted the suggestion of the Judicial Commissioner in the Punjab, Donald Macleod, regarding the strong expediency of supporting missionary schools by public money where they really imparted a good secular education and of increasing their efficiency by grants-in-aid.⁴⁴

In London, meanwhile, the need to have a general system of education for the people of India under the British *Raj* was keenly felt as the time for the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company approached. It was increasingly felt that the East India Company must do something remarkable to justify their hold on India. On 11 March, 1853, the leader of the Manchester group in the British Parliament had announced that they would oppose any permanent legislation to renew the Company's Charter and when they came to know of the British Government's intention of proposing a permanent legislation, they at once formed the Indian Reform Society on 13 March and began to campaign vigorously against the East India Company.⁴⁵ In the debates that followed in Parliament on the occasion of the renewal of the Company's Charter, great interest was expressed by all those who gave witnesses on the subject of education and a strong

44. For details, see Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Dalhousie in India, 1848-56*, Chapter 2, pp. 3-16.

45. R. J. Moore, *Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1853-66*, p. 125.

desire manifested for its extension and improvement.⁴⁶ In a "proposed P.C."—a practice ultimately leading to the formation of a despatch to India, the Court of Directors requested Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, to frame a general scheme applicable to the whole of India, which might be put in force, with due regard to local circumstances, by the government of the several presidencies. "With a view to give effect to these feelings and wishes" as expressed on the subject of education in India in the debates in Parliament, the Court of Directors supplied Wood with all the necessary materials to frame a comprehensive policy in education but told him that it would not be necessary for the purpose of effecting this important object that the system hitherto acted on, differing greatly as it does in detail in the several Presidencies, should undergo any great or violent change, but rather that the object should be sought by an extension of that system, in some directions, and by the use and encouragement of those educational establishments unconnected with Government, which have found much favour with the general community, but which have hitherto received no countenance or support from the State. In this connection the East India House particularly recommended to Wood Thomason's system of vernacular education for his consideration : "With regard to the village schools the plan already acted on with success in the North-Western Provinces and in Bombay assisting and encouraging the efforts of the people themselves for the improvement of existing schools should be adhered to, and there seems no reason to doubt that this mode of proceeding will be found adequate to the end in view".⁴⁷

The Education Despatch of 19 July, 1854 enunciating the education policy of the British *Raj* reached India in October 1854 and Dalhousie was both pleased and puzzled to find that

46. See *Parliamentary Paper* 1852-3, XXXII, 1-639 for the *Second Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Education in India* comprising the Minutes of Evidence and various written papers by noted educationists like Perry, Marshman, Trevelyan, Wilson, Cameron, Duff etc.

47. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, "Dalhousie, Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 1854" in *History of Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 38.

though the Despatch was really an extension of the work already done in India, this fact had not been fully acknowledged by the Court of Directors. Dalhousie, however, did not allow his personal feelings to stand in the way of the implementation of the provisions of the Despatch which opened an era of "Anglo-Vernacular educational epoch" in the history of Indian education. The Despatch consisted of 100 paragraphs and those could be grouped subject-wise under the following heads : (i) machinery for managing the department of education, (ii) establishment of university and (iii) institution of grants-in-aid. In the opening paragraphs it laid the following as the objectives of the educational policy of the British *Raj* :

"Among many subjects of importance, none can have a stronger claim to our attention than that of education. It is one of our most sacred duties, to be the means, as far as in us lies, of conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge, and which India may, under Providence, derive from her connexion with England....

"We have, moreover, always looked upon the encouragement of education peculiarly important, because calculated not only to produce a higher degree of intellectual fitness, but to raise the moral character of those who partake of its advantages, and so to supply you with servants to whose probity you may with increased confidence commit offices of trust in India....

"Nor, while the character of England is deeply concerned in the success of our efforts for the promotion of education, are her material interests altogether unaffected by the advance of European knowledge in India ; this knowledge will teach the natives of India the marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital, rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of their country, guide them in their efforts, and gradually, but certainly, confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increase of wealth and commerce ; and at the same time, secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles for our manufacturers and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for a

produce of British labour..."⁴⁸

Dalhousie felt that the implementation of the Despatch with such objectives and containing "a scheme of education for all India, far wider and more comprehensive than the local or the Supreme Governments would have ventured to suggest", would be a "tough job". However, with the support of his officials, he was successful in his endeavour and by February, 1855 he was able to report to Wood : "The Education Scheme is, I think, now fairly launched, as far as the Supreme Government can do it, and the Subordinate Governments will work out the details quickly and with goodwill. The whole is being reported to you officially".⁴⁹ By the end of 1855 a distinct department for the supervision of education was constituted. A Director of Public Instruction had been appointed by each Governor and Lt. Governor in Punjab and suitable aid by Inspectors and other means had been allocated to each of them. Provisional rules for regulating grants-in-aid had been sanctioned for the guidance of the local governments. And finally, a committee had been appointed for the purpose of framing a scheme for the establishment of universities at the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. By the time Dalhousie retired from India in March, 1856, it was still engaged on that difficult task, but within a year after that the universities emerged in India at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

Postscript

Thus, the officials of the East India Company, the missionaries, the utilitarians, the Indians and above all the mercantile interests of the British *Raj*—all played their part in developing an education policy in the early 1850s. In 1859, two years after the Mutiny and one year after the transfer of power from the Company to the Crown, the principle and policy of the Education Despatch of 1854 were reviewed, reaffirmed and amplified by another educational despatch sent to the Viceroy by the Secretary

48. See paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of the Education Despatch, in J. A. Richey, ed., *Selections from the Educational Records of the Government of India, 1840-59, Part II*, p. 364 *et seq.*

49. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, "Dalhousie Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 1854.", in *History of Education, op. cit.*, p. 44.

of State for India.⁵⁰ As long as the interests of the British *Raj* were not disturbed, no need was felt to revise or modify the education policy thus framed. But when the British *Raj* was flooded with an army of educated but unemployed young men, the products of their own educational system, they began to face grave problems for the stability of the empire. In the decades following the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, it was increasingly realised that the *Raj's* decision to promote English education since the days of Macaulay was "a story of grave political miscalculation" containing a lesson "that has its significance for other nations which have unde taken a similar enterprises".⁵¹ English education, which was identified with higher education in India, had given birth to a type of character that was "ill regulated, averse from discipline, discontented and in some cases actually disloyal". In short, it had raised "a fighting cock" while it was expected to raise an innocuous "hen". As Curzon later declared in connection with scheme for educational reform at a conference in Simla : "When Erasmus was reproached with having laid the egg from which came forth the Reformation, 'Yes', he replied : 'but I laid a hen's egg, and Luther had hatched a fighting cock'. This, I believe, is pretty much the view of a good many critics of English education in India".⁵² Yet despite all such onslaughts on the educational system which was born out of the education policy enunciated in 1854, it happily survived. And despite the attempts of the Indian *Raj* to make it more suitable to the needs and aspirations of an emergent nation by appointing three commissions⁵³ within three decades since 1947, the education system as it exists today is basically the same as it had been set up by the Education Despatch of 1854.

50. See J. A. Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 426 *et seq.*

51. See Sir Alfred C. Lyall's *Introduction* to Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest*, pp. XIII-VI.

52. See for details Curzon's inaugural speech at the Conference at Simla in *Home Education A Progs.*, October 1901, No. 19, Appendix A, p. 12.

53. The three commissions that were appointed to renovate the colonial education system to suit the needs and aspirations of an independent nation were : (1) Radhakrishnan Commission in 1948, (2) Mudaliar Commission in 1952, and (3) Kothari Commission in 1964.

The Education Despatch of 1854*

I

The foundation of a modern educational system in India which has successfully stood the test of time¹ was laid by the Education Despatch of 1854, sent by Charles Wood, the President or the Board of Control, to Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India. The Despatch also popularly known as the Wood's Education Despatch, was mainly the work of Dalhousie who supplied Wood with all the necessary materials needed for framing it. Unfortunately Dalhousie's contribution to the making of the Education Despatch was not officially mentioned by Wood and

* This paper was written while I had been on a Fellowship at Edinburgh University, Scotland, during the academic years of 1968-70 and a shortened version of it was delivered at an Edinburgh University Seminar in the Summer of 1969. The full version of the paper appeared in the Journal of the History of Education Society in Great Britain, *History of Education*, edited by Charles Webster, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in the Summer of 1975.

1. Despite the lapse of one hundred and thirty-three years since 1854 and the appointment of various commissions, before and after 1947, the educational system in India remains basically unaltered.

this forms the ground on which scholars who have later worked on the Dalhousie era have rejected Dalhousie's claim for a share in the making of it. And the most important of them is Professor R. J. Moore.

In his article in the *English Historical Review*, Prof. Moore has shown how Sir Charles Wood, the president of the Board of Control, and not Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India had "planned the Despatch, supervised and helped in the drafting of it with pertinacious care, and ultimately admitted or rejected the many suggestions to improve it".² While considering Dalhousie's claim for a share in the making of the Despatch, he observes :

If Wood had made substantial use of letters or documents on education which Dalhousie had sent home, there would be grounds for recognising claims for the latter's influence upon the Despatch. But this seems scarcely to have been the case.³

He reiterates the same view in his *Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1853-66* :

When Wood presented the document to an enthusiastic House of Commons, he listed the names of several men who had contributed to, or whom he had consulted about, its contents. Those of Mill and Dalhousie were not mentioned. Indeed, the story of the Despatch's development may be told without referring to either of them.⁴

The reference to Mill arises from the fact that B.T. McCully in his *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* has advanced a claim on behalf of John Stuart Mill as one who had penned the Despatch. As he observes :

According to the procedure usual in such matters (of drafting the documents) the initial draft probably was composed at the East India House. This would seem to point to John Stuart Mill, who at the time had charge of the political department and in that capacity was alleged to

2. "The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch" in *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXX, p. 85.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

4. R. J. Moore, *Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy*, pp. 108-9.

have written almost every "political" despatch of any importance that conveyed the instruction of the Directors to their Pro-consuls in Asia. Mill's interest in the education of the natives lends further strength to the assumption.⁵

McCully himself, however, critically examines the case of Mill as the author of the Despatch and comes to the conclusion that "in the absence of more convincing proof, at least it would be improper to attribute the language of the Despatch to him".⁶

But Moore's contention that the story of the Despatch's development may be told without referring to Dalhousie cannot be justified even by the Collection of *Wood Papers* itself. These papers reveal that Wood was requested by the East India House to frame a general scheme applicable to the whole of India, which may be put in force, with due regard to local circumstances, by the Government of the several Presidencies,⁷ in a "proposed P.C."⁸—a practice ultimately leading to the formation of a despatch to India.⁹ The occasion for this arose from the discussion which took place in Parliament relating to the Act for the future Government of India when great interest was expressed on the subject of education and a strong desire manifested for its extension and improvement.¹⁰ "With a view to give effect to these feelings and wishes"¹¹, the East India House supplied Wood with all the necessary materials to frame a comprehensive policy on education but told him that it would "not be necessary for the purpose of effecting this important object that the system hitherto acted on, differing greatly as it does in detail in the several Presidencies, should undergo any great or violent change, but rather that the object should be sought by an extension of that system, in some directions, and by the use and encouragement of those Educational Establishments, unconnected with Government, which have found much favour with the general

5. B. T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, p. 137.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

7. Bourdillon to Wood, No date. *Wood Papers*, 12, para. 34.

8. The letter is marked by these three words in pencil.

9. C. H. Philips, *The East India Company*, pp. 20-1.

10. Bourdillon to Wood, *Wood Papers*, 12, para. 1.

11. *Ibid.*, para 2.

community, but which have hitherto received no countenance or support from the State"¹². In this connection the East India House particularly recommended to Wood, Thomason's¹³ system of vernacular education for his consideration :

With regard to the village schools the plan already acted on with success in the N. W. Province and in Bombay assisting and encouraging the efforts of the people themselves for the improvement of existing schools should be adhered to : and there seems no reason to doubt that this mode of proceeding will be found adequate to the end in view.¹⁴

Wood's Secretary, later Lord Nothbrook, went through the materials supplied by the East India House carefully, and jotted down for him,¹⁵ the following main points :

The general result of the information showed that in the North-Western Provinces alone was there anything approaching to a systematic scheme for educating or improving the education of the people.

That in Bengal and in the neighbourhood of the other Presidency Towns there was a considerable demand for English which had been responded to by the Government. That wherever practical education had been attempted it been most successful and that a very considerable private agency might be taken advantage of, if grants-in-aid were sanctioned.

There was ample information from which to draw up a general scheme—and to make Native Education an integral part of the ordinary administration in India.¹⁶

The absence of any date and place in "the various stages through which the education dft. of 1854 passed"¹⁷ is indeed

12. Bourdillon to Wood, *Wood Papers*, 12, para. 11.

13. James Thomason was the Lt. Governor of the North-Western Provinces, 1848-53. For details about his administration, see D. Awasthi, *The Dawn of Modern Administration*.

14. *Ibid.*, para. 17.

15. This impression is derived from the fact that the hand-writing in the manuscript is different from Wood's.

16. *Wood Papers*, 12.

17. Written by Wood. *Wood Papers*, 12.

surprising and perhaps unexpected in the case of one who was, at least in the eyes of his contemporaries, "a master of detail".¹⁸ This certainly leaves posterity in confusion about the strict chronological development of the different stages in the draft of the Education Despatch. Whatever may be the motives of Wood in such behaviour, the various stages in the draft show that he was well informed by the Court about the development in Indian educational policy with a view to the framing of an educational despatch. If Dalhousie had not sent home the necessary papers about educational experiments in India, how could Wood come to know of them from the East India House? In fact, the Education Despatch of 19 July, 1854 clearly indicates, on close examination, a borrowing from Dalhousie who was supporting Thomason's scheme for vernacular education experimentally. In para 16 the Despatch refers to Mr. Thomason, the Lt. Governor of Agra, as one who had "displayed that accurate knowledge of the condition and requirement of the people, under his charge, and that clear and ready perception of the practical measures best suited for their welfare"¹⁹ and greatly commended his work in paragraphs 91²⁰, 92²¹ and concluded with this observation about it in paragraph 93: "We have already referred to it as the model by which the efforts of other Presidencies...should be guided".²² This Dalhousie had proposed to do in 1853, when he decided to extend Thomason's scheme of vernacular education which had proved successful in some districts in the North-Western provinces to the Punjab and Bengal, long before the coming of the Despatch in 1854. And one may very well agree with a learned contemporary who knew India well, the Boden Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, Monier Williams:

One great merit of Mr. Thomason's scheme of popular education was that it contained in itself great aptitude for

18. A. West, *Recollections*, Vol. 1, p. 194. West served under Wood when the latter became the First Lord of Admiralty in Palmerstone's Government in February, 1853 and was the author of a work on Wood's administration.

19. *Dalhousie Papers*, 207, p. 5.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

internal development and improvement. His method was adopted as a model by other Governments, and led in the end to the celebrated educational Despatch from the Court of Directors to the Governor-General of India (Lord Dalhousie), dated July 19th, 1854.²³

A critical study of the Despatch gives the impression that besides adopting Thomason's plan for vernacular education in India, it develops many of Dalhousie's own ideas with regard to technical and female education in India in paragraphs 31²⁴ and 83²⁵ respectively. It also expands Dalhousie's ideas of Indian universities, a model of which he hoped to see in the Presidency College in 1853.²⁶ As Wood later admits: "I am very well pleased to see what you have done as to your Presidency College at Calcutta. It harmonises very well with our University Scheme"²⁷. Again it can be seen in his *Papers* that a few months before the coming of the Despatch he was championing the principle of grants-in-aid to private and missionary schools in India.²⁸ In short, the Education Despatch of 19 July, 1854 is not a negation to, but an expansion of the education policy pursued by Dalhousie and his predecessors in India.

George D. Bearce who has studied British attitudes towards India from 1784 to 1858 carefully, comes to the same conclusions from a study of other sources :

In most respects there was nothing new in Wood's programme for Indian education. Elements of Wood's comprehensive programme went back to the educational ideas of Munro and Elphinstone, to the continuous work of the missionaries since 1813, and to the utilitarian ideas about education found in Macaulay and James Mill. Attention to technological education—preparing Indians in science and industry for the coming modern world—was a special concern of the age

23. M. Monier Williams, *Modern India and the Indians*, p. 297.

24. *Dalhousie Papers*, 207, p. 25.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

26. *Dalhousie Papers*, 34/1.

27. Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July, 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 5.

28. *Dalhousie Papers*, 37/70.

29. *Dalhousie Papers*, 39/80.

of Dalhousie, for earlier thinkers could hardly visualise the technological education that would accompany railways, irrigation works, and agricultural technology. What was significant about the dispatch was its comprehensiveness and the optimism.³⁰

Again, Kamala Sen, who has worked on "Sir Charles Wood and the Origin and Evolution of Modern University Education in India during the nineteenth century" has shown that the scheme of the modern Indian universities as outlined in Wood's Despatch was not the work of Wood but of Dr. Mouat, Secretary to the Council of Education in Bengal who had submitted a similar plan to the Court of Directors through the Government of India for their consideration in 1845. The enthusiasm of Dalhousie and the public opinion in England and India in favour of modern universities in India had much to do with their coming in India.³¹

So, by not referring to what the Government of India had done in the field of education and by not acknowledging the various proposals on education submitted to the Court of Directors for their approval before July, 1854, Wood had done, as Dalhousie wrote to his most intimate and old friend, Couper, "the shabbiest injustice to the Government of India".³²

Professor Moore has treated the outburst of such natural sentiments of Dalhousie as evidence that he "was wont to exaggerate his achievement in the field of vernacular education".³³ If Dr. Moore had studied the *Dalhousie Papers* at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, besides studying the *Wood Papers* carefully, if he had studied the Education Despatch of 19 July, 1854, critically and finally, if he had made himself acquainted with the education policy of Dalhousie and his predecessors in India before 1854, he would have probably held a different opinion.

30. G. D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India*, pp. 228-9.

31. See Chs. 2-4, pp. 22-141 in K. Sen's "Charles Wood and...the nineteenth century", Sheffield M.A. thesis in education, 1960.

32. Dalhousie to Couper, 1854, J.G.A. Baird (ed.), *Private Letters of Marquesses of Dalhousie*, p. 324, Also see below.

33. "The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch" in *English Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

II

Since the receipt of the request from the Court³⁴ and the sittings of the Lord's Committee on education in May-July, 1853³⁵, Wood had been thinking of making some positive achievement in the field of education. He had begun to examine the witnesses of Dr. Alexander Duff, the missionary who had initiated the move for better education in India,³⁶ James Marshman, the editor of the *Friend of India*, Trevelyan and C. H. Cameron.³⁷ In August, he had written to Dalhousie :

"I am also a good deal at sea in education. I have had no time to work into it myself and I don't see anybody who can give me a very unbiased opinion—for I shall be the more obliged to you for enlightening me about it... I shall wish you to desire somebody to prepare a report showing existing matters as they are—and also what is feasible in the way of extension".³⁸

In reply, in October, Dalhousie told him that for education, he would find his complete printed reports of everything for many years past from India House and in the Board Library. They would give him a complete view of education. He also requested him to consult Trevelyan, "a Pundit upon education and will at once point out" what he wanted. And finally he added, "if more is required and you will describe fully what you wish I will endeavour to procure it for you".³⁹

In November, 1853, Dalhousie wrote to Wood about "a very large proposal for native education in the three divisions of the Presidency of Bengal" and another proposal for a General College here "on their way through the Govt. of India".⁴⁰

It was, in fact, the proposal for extending Thomason's system of vernacular education to the rest of the North-Western

34. "The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch" in *English Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

35. See *PP. HC.*, 1852-3, Vol. 32, pp. 1-639 for the *Second Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Education in India* comprising the Minutes of evidence and various written papers by noted educationists like Perry, Marshman, Trevelyan, Wilson, Cameron, etc.

36. McCully, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-5.

37. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

38. Wood to Dalhousie, 9 August 1853, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 4.

39. Dalhousie to Wood, 4 October 1853, *Dalhousie Papers*, 62, pp. 5-6.

40. Dalhousie to Wood, 17 November 1853, *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Provinces, Bengal and the Punjab and that for the establishment of the Presidency College at Calcutta. He had already written to the Court for their sanction to these proposals. And we know Dalhousie complained officially as he recorded in his *Diary* after the receipt of the Despatch of 1854, that the receipt of the proposals had not been acknowledged—not to speak of their sanction to them—even after a lapse of one year.

In a letter of 13 June, 1854, he first made this known to Wood a few months before the coming of the Education Despatch to India. In that letter he had pointed out that he had sent home “a scheme of general vernacular education for all the North-Western Provinces” and that its receipt had not yet been acknowledged.⁴¹ Wood gave him no immediate reply to this question.

He repeated his complaint to Wood when he learnt from him that he had sent to India, with the sanction of the Home Government, “a draft on education”⁴² giving a general scheme for India :

“I shall be very happy to receive your despatch on Education. In November, 1853, I sent home a proposal for a complete system of Vernacular Education for the N. W. Provinces, the Punjab and Bengal. The receipt of it has never been acknowledged”.⁴³

Wood, who had already received Dalhousie’s letter of 13 June, 1854, where he first heard this complaint wrote to him :

“The scheme for vernacular education in N. W. Provinces never came up at the time when you sent it and I only disinterested it from the E. I. House on the receipt of your letter”.⁴⁴

Professor Moore admits that the Company’s “Register of Drafts” gives the date of the receipt of the scheme of Dalhousie as 4 November, 1853.⁴⁵ This shows that Dalhousie’s scheme had certainly arrived at the East India House. Moore has

41. Dalhousie to Wood, 13 June 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 63, p. 8.

42. Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 5.

43. Dalhousie to Wood, 4 August 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 63, pp. 1-2.

44. Wood to Dalhousie, 9 August 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, pp. 2-3.

45. “The Composition of Wood’s Education Despatch” in *English Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

argued that since two months after its arrival, Wood had written to Elphinstone on 24 January that he was "very anxious" to see Dalhousie's proposed scheme of education suggests he had seen nothing of it, and has used his letter of 9 August, 1854, to show that since "he had seen nothing of Dalhousie's on the question, there seems no reason to question this story".⁴⁶ We know from a study of Wood's *Papers* that he had been kept well-informed about the developments in the field of education in India and he himself had alluded to the successful working of the Thomason's scheme in his *Papers* and hoped this could be a model for any general scheme of education in India. Besides, since the creation of the Board of Control at London by Pitt's India Act of 1783-4, it was to exercise a supervisory control over all dealings of the Directors with India.⁴⁷ By the mid-nineteenth century the President of the Board of Control was looked upon as supreme in all Indian affairs. In 1847, Brunnow thus introduced John Hobhouse, who was then the President of the Board of Control to the Grand-duke Constantine at one of Lady Palmerstone's parties: "C'est le roi des Indes".⁴⁸ In such an elevated position as the President of the Board of Control, Wood was likely to be in possession of all information about India.

It was indeed a very difficult task to draw a general plan for education for a vast country like India by one who had no direct acquaintance with the socio-economic life of the country concerned. In a letter to Marshman, Wood confessed this difficulty: "I confess that I do not see my way as yet ... how we could embark on so gigantic an undertaking".⁴⁹ He had therefore, to be kept well-informed about educational developments in India and had to depend on others directly connected with the educational system in India in the making of the

46. "The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch" in *English Historical Review*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

47. P. Auber, *An Analysis of the Constitution of the East India Company*, pp. 88-99.

48. Lord Broughton, *Recollections of a Long Life*, Vol. 6, p. 195.

49. Wood to Marshman, 22 November 1853. *Wood Papers*, India Board Letter Book, Vol. 4, p. 1.

Education Despatch of 1854.⁵⁰ In a letter to Dalhousie he named the persons whom he had consulted : "Macaulay, Lord Glenelg, Bayley and Prinsep, Marshman, the Church Missionaries, Perry, Mouatt, Beadon and everybody we could think of here, as having an authority on the subject have been consulted, and have cordially approved the scheme".⁵¹ In the face of this admission, it would seem surprising that Wood should take the whole credit for the Education Despatch of 1854 for himself. In a letter to Colville, Dalhousie's Legislative Councillor and Law Commissioner, he boasted : "I hope to have laid the foundation of a great improvement in the condition of the natives of our Indian territories".⁵² It was quite in keeping with this sentiment of Wood that Dalhousie has recorded rather bitterly in his *Diary* :

The Education despatch ... is a mere clap-trap put forth to the House of Commons by Sir Charles Wood ; whereby he seeks to filch for himself the whole credit of all that has been, or is to be, done ; thus unduly detracting from the credit which fairly belongs to the Government of India and to the local administration.⁵³

Wood never told Dalhousie about what he was going to do in the field of education though he had earlier solicited Dalhousie's help to formulate his ideas about it. He also consulted many others—and most of them, except Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, had known about the Education Despatch even, before, it was sent out to India.⁵⁴ One of them, Marshman, the editor of the *Friend of India*, published "extracts from the paragraphs" of the Despatch, which he said

50. Cf. "He [Wood] was distinguished not by any originality of thought, but by a readiness to seek counsel where ever it might be found, by his judgement in evaluating opinion, and, when he had set his courses, by his effectiveness in disarming opposition and overriding objection." See Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

51. Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 4.

52. Wood to Colville, 24 October 1854, *Wood Papers*, India Board : Letter Book, Vol. 6, p. 119.

53. Dalhousie's *Diary*, 12 October 1854, quoted in M. N. Das, *Studies in Economic and Social Development of Modern India*, p. 261.

54. Wood sent copies of the second draft of the Education Despatch to Macaulay, Prinsep, Perry and Marshman. See *Wood Papers*, 12.

“were obtained from the Board of Control and he was so good as to offer a sight of them” to Dalhousie through a gentleman who informed him.⁵⁵ But Dalhousie declined, first, because he did not wish to let it be supposed that he obtained his first knowledge of a despatch on general education from the *Friend of India* and secondly, because he believed that the extracts must be from some draft of an incomplete despatch surreptitiously obtained.⁵⁶ After learning from Wood that he had sent the Despatch on 19 July, 1854, Dalhousie disclosed this incident to him and added rather sharply : “. . . I think it right to let you know this, because I feel very sure that it would not have been your wish that this information should reach India thus, and that the confidence of yourself or your office must have been abused”.⁵⁷

It was Wood’s consciousness that Dalhousie was unjustly deprived of a share in the credit for the Education Despatch that led him to make a vain attempt to soothe his feelings :

You seem, as you say, to have fairly done your best as to Education. We have, I think, done ours. We approve all you have proposed—you must execute all that we have directed. I made my statement [in the House of Commons] last night⁵⁸ and the Education Scheme was loudly and proudly approved and we were promised that our names should be handed down together as renovators of India. What prospects of immortality !⁵⁹

Posterity, however, would give a better share of credit to Dalhousie as the “renovator” of India since in his approach to the educational problems in India Dalhousie was not as narrow as Wood was. The *Wood Papers* show that he was unwilling to provide higher education⁶⁰ for all since this would

55. Dalhousie to Wood, 4 August 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 53, p. 2.

56. Dalhousie to Wood, 4 August 1854, *Ibid.*, p. 2.

57. *Ibid.*

58. See Wood’s speech on 8 August, Col. 1458-63, Hansard’s *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 135.

59. Wood to Dalhousie, 9 August 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 3.

60. For a Comparative study of the attitudes of Wood and Dalhousie towards higher education, see M. N. Das’s Article in the Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society, *Bengal : Past and Present*, Vol. LXXIV, 1955, pp. 151-8.

create a "discontented class unless they are employed"⁶¹, and would ruin the British Empire in India ultimately. Dalhousie's mind was not haunted by such fears and given time and opportunity he would have certainly evolved an educational system in India, which with his respect for Oriental learning coupled with his belief in the need for Western knowledge, would probably be practically far superior to what was founded by the Despatch of 1854. The latter, in its introductory paragraphs certainly raised many high hopes and aspirations⁶² which were scarcely fulfilled by succeeding Governor-Generals and Viceroy.

III

Dalhousie, however, did not allow his personal feeling to stand in the way of the implementation of provisions of the Despatch,⁶³ which opened an era of "Anglo-Vernacular educational epoch"⁶⁴ in the history of Indian education. He realised that "it contained, a scheme of education for all India far wider and more comprehensive than the local or the Supreme Governments would have ventured to suggest. It left nothing to be desired".⁶⁵ Its implementation indeed would be "a tough job" but he assured Wood that he would have "the cordial exertions of us all".⁶⁶ In the determination of the measures to be taken in execution of the instructions of the Court he sought the assistance of those experienced in educational matters such as the Lt. Governor of Bengal, Halliday, the Legislative Council Member, Grant and the President of the Council of Education, Colville.⁶⁷

61. Wood to Dalhousie, 8 June 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 2, Wood expressed similar sentiments in many previous letters to Dalhousie and to Elphinstone. See Wood to Dalhousie, 24 April 1854 and 24 November 1853. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Also Wood to Elphinstone, 24 January 1854. *Wood Papers*. India Board, Letter Book, Vol. 4, pp. 104-6
62. Court of Directors to the Governor-General, 19 July 1854, Paras 1-10. See J. A. Richey, ed., *Selections from the Educational Records of the Government of India*, Vol. 2, pp. 364-7.
63. *Dalhousie's Diary*, 12 October 1854, quoted in M. N. Das, *op. cit.*
64. Monier Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 297.
65. *Dalhousie Papers* 212, pp. 16-17.
66. Dalhousie to Wood, 7 November 1854, *Dalhousie Papers* 163.
67. *Ibid.*

Dalhousie analysed the subject of the Despatch under three principal heads : (1) machinery for managing the Department of Education, (2) establishment of the university and (3) grants-in-aid and proceeded to submit measures under each of them separately. Since the Court had actually authorised Madras and Bombay to make provisional arrangements to save time which were to be reported to the Government of India for approval and sanction, his measures were mostly confined to Bengal and the North-Western Provinces.

He suggested that in each Governorship and Lt. Governorship an officer should be appointed who was to be called the Director of Public Instruction to supervise the Department of Education. His salary should not exceed Rs. 3,000 a month but if it was fixed at less than Rs 3,000 a month, he would be entitled to a gradual increase to it until it reached that sum so as to retain the services of a competent officer for a considerable time. There should be four Inspectors for Bengal on salaries varying from Rs 500 to Rs 1,500 a month and two for the North-Western Provinces on salaries of Rs 800 to Rs 1,200 a month. The Inspectors were to play an important part in the administration of the Department of Education since the success or failure of the system of grants-in-aid and the well-doing of the Government and private schools and colleges would depend upon their vigilance and efficiency. As the Government of Bombay had not yet submitted any scheme, the measures for Bengal and the North-Western Provinces should also be applicable to it. He also extended this system to Madras which had submitted a different scheme—an Educational Secretary to the Government on a salary of Rs 3,333 a month, an Under Secretary and six Inspectors on Rs 1,350 a month in order to introduce uniformity and economy in the administration of the Department of Education.

The next practical step was the establishment of the university. Here Dalhousie noted an ambiguity in the Despatch. Judging from the experiences as well as from the whole purport of the Despatch it could be supposed that the establishment of the university, like all other measures suggested or directed in the document, was at once to be carried into effect by the Governor-General-in-Council. More, so, because the university

in its examinations, its connection with and superintendence over affiliated institutions, its power of making rules for the whole subject to the approval of the Government, and its function of giving degrees, seemed to be almost essential to the vital energy of the new system as laid down in the Despatch. Therefore, the most reasonable and the right course to adopt would be to introduce a Bill in the Legislative Council, in analogy to the Course pursued on the establishment of London University, to incorporate and empower the university for its proper purposes and also to name and appoint the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Fellows and provide for filling of subsequent-vacancies in their numbers. But for wording of the paragraph 33 in the Despatch, he could not do that. And he said :

My first impression on receiving the Despatch undoubtedly was, that it was the wish of the Honourable Court that the Government of India should proceed to the establishment of the Universities, simultaneously with the other charges which were authorised in the Despatch. The general terms of that document and causal expressions contained in other letters from the Honourable Court still seem to favour that interpretation. It is the one which my own wishes would incline me to adopt, and I am most reluctant to surrender it. But the language of the 33 paragraph is so explicit and precise : it so distinctly requires the Government of India to report to the Honourable Court with reference to the proposed Universities upon the best method of procedure with a view to their incorporation by Acts of the Legislative Council of India and it differs so markedly from the form of expression employed in para 20, that I can find no escape from the approach of reporting to the Honourable Court our recommendations respecting the proposed Universities before we proceed to give effect to them.⁶⁸

He, therefore, recommended that the Governor-General of Bengal should act provisionally as the Chancellor of the Calcutta University and the members of his Executive Council as well as the European and Indian members of the Council

68. *Dalhousie Papers*, 39/78.

of Education should be its Fellows. He also recommended a list of persons who would constitute "the Senatus" and asked the Bombay Government to submit such a list to him. The Senate of each university should frame the rules for applications for affiliations by the institutions, for examinations and for the conferring of degrees and honours. There should be two degrees in each of the subjects viz., Literature, Mathematics, Science, Law, Civil Engineering and Medicine. On the taking of each degree the student should have, as in London University, an opportunity of taking honours and those who did not avail themselves of those opportunities would be tempted by the second degree to carry their education beyond the low standard of the common degree as contemplated in the Despatch. It also suggested the institution of Professorships of Law, Civil Engineering, the Vernacular and the learned languages of India. But in Calcutta since they already existed at the Hindu College and would be established at the Presidency College or at the Civil Engineering College, the University of Calcutta should be, according to the strict model of the London University, confined to the function of examination and giving degrees.

Dalhousie then proceeded to submit measures to carry out the instructions of the Court relating to grants-in-aid. The instructions were so sufficient that Dalhousie found little room for "much remarks". The Despatch said that rules were to be framed for the administration of the grants, and the framing of these rules would probably be best done by the several Local Governments with the assistance of their respective heads of the Department of Education and when framed, they were to be submitted to the Government of India for approval. They were to be based on entire non-interference with the religious instructions conveyed in the schools assisted. The grants were to be given, so far as the requirements of districts and the funds at disposal permitted, to all schools which gave a good secular education and were under permanent local managements. No grants would be given to schools, except formal ones, which did not require from their pupils a fee for specific objects in preference to simple pecuniary grants for general expenses. The specific objects were stated to be augmentation of salaries

of head teachers, supply of junior teachers, foundation of scholarships, erecting or repairing a school house and provision of books. The amount and continuance of assistance would depend on the reports of the Government Inspectors. The effect of these grants should be, in no case, the substitution of public for private expenditure but the increase and improvement of education.

After making various observations which would guide the Local Governments in the framing of the rules for the grants-in-aid, Dalhousie pointed out that they ought not be fettered by the necessity for referring every individual proposal for a grant-in-aid to the Supreme Government. It would be much better in every way that certain rules having been prepared by the Local Governments regarding grants-in-aid and having received the confirmation of the Governor-General-in-Council, the Local Governments should be left entirely free in the distribution of the grants. In like manner, the aggregate annual amount of the grants having been fixed, the details of the expenditure should be left entirely to them.⁶⁹

In January, 1853, Dalhousie laid these proposals for working out the Despatch of 1854 before his Council⁷⁰ and by February, he was able to report to Wood :

The Education Scheme is, I think, now fairly launched, as far as the Supreme Govt. can do it, and the Subordinate Govts. will work out the details quickly and with good will. The whole is being reported to you officially.⁷¹

Wood told him that he was very glad to hear of this and thanked him very much "for having taken so much interest in it".⁷² Indeed Dalhousie took a keen interest in the working out of the Despatch. He hoped that if he lived, he would see "the whole organised and in complete operation (so far as this can be affected at once)" before he left India.⁷³

And he did not hope in vain. By the end of 1855, a distinct department for the superintendence of education was constituted.

69. *Dalhousie Papers*, 39/78.

70. Dalhousie to Wood, 21 January 1853, *Dalhousie Papers*, 64.

71. Dalhousie to Wood, 8 February 1853, *Ibid*.

72. Wood to Dalhousie, 26 March 1853, *Dalhousie Papers*, 58, p. 1.

73. Dalhousie to Wood, 8 February 1853, *Dalhousie Papers*, 64.

A Director of Public Instruction had been appointed by each Governor and Lt. Governor in the Punjab, and suitable aid by inspectors and others had been allotted to each of them. Provisional rules for regulating grants-in-aid had been sanctioned for the guidance of the Local Governments. And finally a committee had been appointed for the purpose of framing a scheme for the establishment of universities at the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. By the time Dalhousie retired from India in March, 1856, it was still engaged on that difficult task.⁷⁴

Viewed as a whole, it is not certainly an exaggeration to say with Lee-Warner that "in the matter of education, posterity has never given to Dalhousie the credit that is his due, not merely in organising the departments of public instruction, but also in laying down the principles to be followed".⁷⁵ It must be remembered that here Lee-Warner does not speak about Dalhousie's share in the making of the Despatch of 1854 as Prof. Moore would have as believe⁷⁶ but refers to his achievement in working it out. Wood knew that to carry out such a scheme "great labour must be imposed ... and great difficulties must be encountered".⁷⁷ He had, therefore, written to Dalhousie when he sent out the Education Despatch of 1854 to India :

"I am aware that, however, good a scheme of this kind may be, the practical working of it is of more importance still and much more will depend upon the men appointed to carry the details out than on any skill in developing it".⁷⁸

It is perhaps the irony of history that Wood's "skill" which devised the Education Despatch of 1854 should be remembered and that the "skill" which not only contributed to its development but put it into practical shape in India should be forgotten.

74. *Dalhousie Papers* 212, pp. 16-17.

75. W. Lee-Warner, *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, Vol. 2, p. 206.

76. "The Composition of Wood's Education Despatch" in *English Historical Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

77. Wood to Dalhousie, 23 October 1854, *Dalhousie Papers*, 57, p. 2.

78. Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Curzon's University Reform : 1899-1905*

Curzon as the head of the British Government in India, passed in 1904, the Indian Universities Act to bring about radical changes into the five existing universities at Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore and Allahabad. Among these were an enlargement of the functions of the university, reduction in the size of the university senates ; introduction of the principles of election ; statutory recognition of the syndicates where university teachers were to be given an adequate representation ; stricter conditions for the affiliation of colleges to a university ; definition of the territorial limits of the university ; provision for an annual grant of Rs 5 lakhs to the five universities and finally powers to the government to make additions and alterations while approving the regulations passed by the senates.¹

The Act which did not find favour with the educated Indians faced problems when the government was about to implement

*The research on which this paper is based has been mainly done in New Delhi and Calcutta (over the past few years) during my leisure hours and university vacations.

1. For details, see *Papers Relating to the Act VIII of 1904*.

it. No sooner had the provisional syndicates been chosen than the validity of the directions issued by the Chancellor of the Bombay University who had ordered that the election should be held by the faculties, was challenged in the Bombay High Court² and it was speedily evident that similar action was going to be taken at Calcutta also and that the controversy would soon "extend to Madras, Allahabad and Lahore and that litigation may become general".³ Curzon wanted to speedily put an end to the doubts raised as to the construction of the Indian Universities Act and to the validity of some the directions issued under it by the Chancellors by legislation as suggested by the Bombay Governor,⁴ and introduced a Bill in his Legislative Council validating the action of the Chancellors and the constitution of the senates and the syndicates.⁵ The Validating Bill was passed into law on 10 February, 1905. It provided that all directions purporting to have been constituted under the Indian Universities Act of 1904 had been duly issued and constituted.⁶

On the eve of the passing of the Indian Universities Act of 1904, while addressing the Convocation of the Calcutta University, Curzon observed that he "now" occupied the unusual position of the last Chancellor of an old régime, addressing the last Senate and the last Syndicate of an era that was about to disappear. "There may be some", he continued, "who think that they see in the Vice-Chancellor and myself the two chief executioners, about to admonish their victims before leading them to the scaffold, and who may think that the position is one of some painfulness and restraint. But I can assure

2. Telegram from the Bombay Governor to the Viceroy, 24 January, 1905. *Curzon Papers*, Microfilm Reel No. 11 ; hereinafter cited simply as "Reel". (*Curzon Papers* on microfilm have been consulted at the National Archives of India, New Delhi).
3. *Proceedings of the Legislative Council* on 3 February, 1905, Nos. 20-29, p. 36.
4. Lamington to Curzon, 3 February, 1905, Letter No. 77. *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 11.
5. Curzon to Brodrick, 3 February, 1905, Letter No. 77. *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 6.
6. Act No. II of 1905, See Appendix in *Leg. A. Proceedings*, February, 1905, Nos. 20-29, p. 63.

this convocation on behalf of my honourable colleagues as well as for myself that we entertain no such feelings. For the patient in our view is in no wise doomed to extinction, but is about to reappear with a fresh lease of life ; and the instruments of the sentence held in their hand, not the executioner's axe, but the phial that contains the elixir of a new and happy resurrection''⁷.

Whether the five universities in India did really emerge with "the elixir of a new and happy resurrection" after the Indian Universities Act of 1904 could be questioned but there can be no doubt that some of the principles underlying Curzon's programme for the reform of the Indian universities were really sound. The principles—that every university ought to be a teaching university, that no college should be allowed full privileges unless it was thoroughly well staffed and equipped ; that teachers must always be intimately associated with the government of the university and that the supreme governing body of the university, the Senate, ought not to be too large—were also the principles which had in 1897 provided the basis for the reforms of the London University⁸ which had earlier acted as a model to the establishment of the three universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857.⁹

However, the Indian nationalist leaders felt that under the pretext of reforms, the British *Raj* was really trying to vest all power in the hands of the European educationists to sabotage Indian private enterprise in the field of higher education. They feared that the restriction of the total number of Fellows would create a majority for Europeans in the constitution of the Indian universities and the stricter provisions for affiliation of colleges would be firmly adhered to by the reconstituted senates. Last, but not the least, was the concern expressed by many of the Act which sought to give more power to the government in

7. *University of Calcutta Convocation Addresses*, Vol. 3, p. 955.

8. See *the Report of the Calcutta University Commission, 1917-19*, Vol. 1, p. 65.

9. For details, see *Papers Connected with the Establishment of Universities in India* as well as Mary Anderson's article in Eric Ashby, *Universities : British, Indian, African*.

running the universities—these included the powers to nominate most of the Fellows, the power to require approval for affiliation or disaffiliation of colleges and the power to alter, reject or frame new regulations. In a nutshell, the universities became practically a Department of the State under the new Act.

The passing of the Indian Universities Act was, therefore, greeted with terse comments by the Indian nationalist press. "If the Bill had been in the hands of a body of ordinary human beings", commented the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, "they would never have cared to take the awful responsibility of passing it against such universal protests : for, being only mortals and not the god, they were utterly in the dark as regards its 'profound effect' upon the future of the Indian people"¹⁰. As a matter of fact, the very procedures adopted by Curzon leading to the passing of this Act made the educated Indians suspicious. They were barred from the participation in, as well as the knowledge of the proceedings of the Conference at Simla held in 1901 to discuss the question of reforming Indian universities. Again, they were also annoyed at first at the exclusion of a Hindu representative on the Indian Universities Commission appointed next year to report on the existing five universities and to submit recommendations for their improvement. When the Commission submitted their recommendations on the basis of the evidence of 156 persons—among whom only 63 were Indians—the suspicious of the educated Indians were more than confirmed. And the evidence was never published. There were all-round protests and next year when the Universities Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council at Simla, Surendra Nath Banerjea condemned it in no uncertain terms. And after providing that there was no justification for it, he exhorted his countrymen to raise their protests against it : "To-day we stand face to face", he pointed out, "with one of the gravest crises in our history. Are we to succumb to it or play the part of men ? If you sleep over the situation and indulge in cowardly inaction or if you weakly hesitate and falter, then the heritage of the past will be undone, the interests of the present will be compromised, and, as to the future, you will have forfeited your claim to that

10. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 24 March, 1904, p. 4.

precious boon on constitutional liberty for which you have for the last twenty years, maintained so arduous a struggle".¹¹

It was because of higher education that the gift of Local Self Governments, supplemented by the reform and expansion of the Council, had become a success and elevated the tone of the Indian press and produced "a splendid galaxy of distinguished men" who had contributed greatly to the development of morals and manners, arts and science and the varied and complicated requirements of modern life. University education thus lay at the root of "all our progress" and was "the main-spring, the motive power, the germinal source of all those forces which make for progress".¹²

The Indian nationalist leaders correctly interpreted Curzon's attempt to reform the Indian universities as an attempt to throttle the nascent Indian nationalism by checking the spread of English education in India. For, "it is English Education", as Surendra Nath Banerjea pointed out at the Ahmedabad Congress in his presidential address on 23rd December, 1902, "which has overcome the barriers of race, religion, and language, has dissipated the prejudices and misunderstandings of ages and has created those unifying influences which find a living expression in this vast, this stupendous, this majestic organisation of the National Congress". ... "Could this educated community", Banerjea asked, "submit to the curtailment of this boon — to the restriction of its beneficent area"?¹³

What the nationalist leaders did never ask themselves was the question why the British *Raj* wanted to throttle the nascent Indian nationalism by restricting the area of higher education. It will be interesting to note that the two most important persons concerned with the passing of the Indian Universities Act of 1904, Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, and Curzon, the Governor-General, did not believe that nationalism existed in the India which they ruled. For Hamilton, however, the

11. See *Report of the Proceedings of the Nineteen Indian National Congress* on 30 December 1903, at Madras, pp. 92-93.

12. President's Address at the Eighteen Indian National Congress at Ahmedabad on 23 December, 1902. See the Proceedings of the first day in the *Report of the Eighteen Indian National Congress*.

13. *Ibid.*

spread of education could create nationalism in India not immediately but "50 years hence" and could then pose a problem to "our rule in India".¹⁴ Whereas Curzon thought that some approach to nationalism in India could be evolved much later. In India, Curzon observed in his Calcutta University Convocation Address immediately after the Validating Bill had become a law, "See the claim constantly made that a man is not merely a Bengali or an Oriya or a Maratha or a Sikh but a member of the Indian Nation. I do not think it can yet be said that there is any Indian Nation though in the distant future some approach to it may be evolved".¹⁵

Both were sadly mistaken. Both failed to read correctly the signs of the nascent Indian nationalism. Indian nationalism, which could be traced to Ram Mohan Roy, had matured through the years which saw the introduction of Western education and innovations like railways and electric telegraph and had thrived in the post-Mutiny years mainly on a common problem faced by the young educated Indians and that was the problem of unemployment among them. The British *Raj* was well aware that such a problem could occur once university education was introduced in the country. The *Raj* was therefore cautious about the spread of higher education in India when the Education Despatch of 1854 which provided for the establishment of universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857 was sent out to India. While sending this Despatch, Charles Wood, the President of the Board of control, had told Dalhousie, the Governor-General, that he was unwilling to provide higher education for all since this would create a "discontented class unless they are employed" and would ultimately ruin the British *Raj*.¹⁶ In a letter to Halliday, the Lieutenant Governor of

14. Hamilton to Curzon, 20 September 1899. *Hamilton Papers*, Microfilm Reel No. 1. (*Hamilton Papers* available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi, on microfilm have been consulted).
15. See Curzon's Calcutta University Convocation Address on 11 February, 1905 in C. S. Raghunatha Rao, ed., *Notable Speeches of Lord Curzon*, p. 369.
16. See S. C. Ghosh, "Dalhousie, Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 1854" in Charles Webster, ed., *History of Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 42.

Bengal, he further clarified his views about the spread of higher education : "I do not see the advantage of rearing up a number of highly educated gentlemen at the expense of the State whom you cannot employ, and who will naturally become depositories of discontent. If they choose to educate themselves, well and good, but I am against providing our own future detractors and opponents and grumblers."¹⁷

Wood's observations became prophetic since within a few decades after the establishment of universities there emerged an army of educated youngmen who could not be suitably employed and therefore discontent against the British *Raj* was writ large on their faces. As a matter of fact, the establishment of three universities as per the Education Despatch of 1854 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras gave tremendous fillip to the growth and expansion of higher education in British India which was reflected partly in an increase of the number of institutions for higher education and partly in an increase of the number of students who received it. In 1873 for example, the number of colleges was 55 and that of students was 4,499.¹⁸ In 1881 the corresponding figures were 85 and 7,582 respectively.¹⁹ The number of students coming out successful in the years which followed the establishment of universities was also considerable. Between 1854 and 1873 for example, the number of successful candidates from Matriculation onwards was 12,392 at Calcutta, 5,502 at Madras and 2,703 at Bombay.²⁰ The annual output of the graduates also increased with the growing years since 1857 and there were 175 graduates by 1870, 404 by 1880 and finally 470 by 1884.²¹ Failures of First Arts in 1870 were 570, in 1880, 1,110 and in 1884, 1,289.²² The figures for the English educated class could be obtained by tallying for 1857

17. Wood to Halliday, 24 July, 1854. *Wood Papers*, Indian Board : Letter Book, Book, Vol. 4. (*Wood Papers* at the India Office Library, London, were consulted when the author was working on his monograph on Dalhousie since published).
18. Appendix M, Statement 3 in *Report of the Public Service Commission*, 1886-87.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, Appendix M, Statement 4, p. 82.

through 1884 the total number of successful First Arts and B.A. candidates and adding it to the successful final candidates. Henry Maine estimated five times 5,000 B.A., M.A. for 1883 through 1883 or 25,000 out of an estimated population of 250,000,000.²³ Having received a good secondary school education up to the Matriculation level and having attended a university, these men were certainly very educated compared to the illiterate town-dwellers or village ryots.

What was the prospect open to the large number of students who were thus able to receive higher education in the country ? For one thing, the career in India was never virtually open to talent though the principle had been asserted time and again in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 after the Mutiny to allay fear, suspicion and distrust. Again some avenues like army and politics were closed altogether. In those days agriculture offered little temptation and so did manufacturing and commerce, for the latter was almost impossible without skill, capital and equality of terms with which it could compete with European industry. As a matter of fact, the very nature of the courses with their "unique and disproportionate attention" to literature and philosophy,²⁴ compared with physical and cognate branches of practical instruction tended to limit the choice of a career to either government service or analogous employment.²⁵ "What else can he do but qualify himself", lamented a Calcutta Newspaper,²⁶ "or, if he is a father, train his son for the public service or one of the learned professions ?"

In theory the covenanted civil service²⁷ was open to the Indians since 1853²⁸ but in practice every difficulty stood in their way—the very early age-limits for the examination, the nature of the syllabus, the expense of going to London where the

23. J. Strachey, *India*, p. 187.

24. For details about the courses, see J. A. Richey, ed., *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, p. 371 *et seq.*

25. Richard Temple, *Men and Events of my Time in India*, pp. 432-3.

26. *Indian Mirror*, Calcutta, 13 February, 1878.

27. For the origin of this elite service in India, see S. C. Ghosh, *The Social Conditions of the British Community in Bengal, 1757-1800*, Ch. II.

28. L. S. S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 208 *et seq.*

examination was held, the prejudice against crossing the "black-water" and the official reluctance to admit Indians into this vital service.²⁹ Only posts at the lower level of the uncovenanted service³⁰ were open to the Indians. Here the salaries were very poor, prospects for promotions nil and service conditions extremely bad.³¹ In 1867, for example, there were 13,431 appointments in the salaries of Rs 75 a month or over and more than half of them were held by Europeans who had all the best paid jobs and by Eurasians as revealed by the Survey of Appointments made by Curzon in 1903.

Since men were not often employed outside their own provinces, less than two thousand jobs were available in the uncovenanted executive and judicial branches in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Not all of them were given to the educated ; in Bombay and in Madras less than half of the uncovenanted civilians had qualifications in the new education while in the North Western Provinces and in the Punjab most of these posts went to those who could not boast of any qualifications at all as the available evidence at the Aitchison Commission suggests.³²

The non-availability of suitable openings in the public service naturally compelled many to turn to independent professions such as teaching, law, journalism and medicine.³³ Unlike the Government servants who were cramped by dependence on the goodwill of their employers, here they had greater incentive for taking part in public life. By the end of the 1870s there was hardly any important town in India which did not possess a sprinkle of teachers, lawyers, journalists and doctors who took a very lively and keen interest in social, political, economic and religious questions of the day. It was this

29. S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, p. 271, *et seq.*

30. For the origin of this service, see B. B. Mishra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company*, p. 404, *et seq.*

31. J. P. Naik and S. C. Ghosh, eds., *The Development of Educational Service*, Introduction, pp. XXIX-XXXX.

32. See Appendix 1 to the *Report of the Public Service Commission*, pp. 51-55.

33. For a detailed discussion about the growth of these learned professions, see Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Ch. 3, pp. 114-30.

group of people who later formed the backbone of the Indian National Congress and because of their independence of the government, they were often ridiculed by the European officials and the press.³⁴

It is thus obvious that the moderate difficulty in the 1840s of finding a suitable employment by the educated Indians, had become a major problem in the 1870s. More than a decade ago since that time, and a year before the establishment of the universities in India, *The Friend of India*, had warned of the problem: "Native education had gone so far that it has become one of the most serious problems of the day. What to do with our educated men"?³⁵ Since 1857 when the higher education in India started expanding by leaps and bounds, the problem also became aggravated. By 1877 it reached such dimensions that Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, did not hesitate to record a minute on it: "It is melancholy to see men, who once appeared to receive their honours in the university convocation now applying for some lowly paid appointment, almost begging from office to office, from department to department, or struggling for the practice of petty practitioner, and after all this, returning baffled and disheartened to a poverty stricken home, and then to reflect how far happier their lot might have been had they while at school or college, been able to move in a healthier atmosphere of thought and freer walks of life. Nevertheless, with these examples before their eyes, hundreds, perhaps thousands of youngmen persist in embarking on the same course, which can lead only to the same sad ending".³⁶

The incidence of unemployment among the educated Indians made them discontented with the British *Raj* which not only gave them no relief or sympathy but also excluded them from higher posts in the army and the civil service. They saw the grand spectacle of thousands of foreigners monopolizing all

34. "Wretched pettifogger"—this is how the Bengali lawyers were described by the *Pioneer* in July, 1888. See Prem Narain, *Press and Politics in India*, p. 196.

35. *Friend of India*, Calcutta, 11 December, 1856.

36. Extract from the Minutes by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, 5 January, 1877 in *Administration of Bengal, 1875-78*, p. 59.

the best places under the administration. In the press and on the platform the professionals joined the educated unemployed in waging an acrimonious war of criticism on the British *Raj* for the prevailing unemployment. The attack against the government veered round two grounds ; first, the system of education provided by the government and second, its failure to employ those who had been trained by it. In 1882, the very year which saw the appointment of an Education Commission, Dadabhai Naoroji, that grand old man of the Indian National Congress, wrote to the Secretary of State for India on the subject of unemployment among the educated Indians : "The thousands that are being sent out by the universities every year find themselves in a most anomalous position. There is no place for them in their motherland. They may beg in the streets, or break stones in roads, for ought the rulers seem to care for their natural rights, position and duties in their own country. They may perish or do what they like or can, but scores of Europeans must go from this country to take up what belongs to them, and that in spite of every profession for years and years past and up to the present day, of English statesmen, that they must govern India for India's good, by solemn Acts and declarations of Parliament and above all by the words of the august Sovereign himself."³⁷ Next year a contributor to the *Indian Spectator* brought out more clearly the difference between the prospect of an educated Indian and that of an Englishman : "How many university graduates go without a work ? The luckiest of them is often too glad to begin life as a Mamlatdar's³⁸ clerk. Now look at his English contemporary. The very first appointment he holds is that of Assistant Judge or Collector. What a difference when both had worked equally hard. The native graduate knows his importance, he feels his neglect all the more bitterly. He has the power to do harm, and may exercise that power. The uneducated does not feel neglect, he can get some work or other which he is not too proud. Not so that educated youth. He knows his marketable value and when neglected, he frets and fumes".³⁹

37. *Journal of the East India Association*, Vol. XIV, 1882, pp. 171-172.

38. Subordinate Collector, normally held by an Indian.

39. *Indian Spectator*, Bombay, 27 March, 1883.

Such criticisms were likely to arouse the suspicions of the British *Raj*. As the *Englishman* wrote in 1870 : "The number of thinly veneered, but highly polished, students who are every year turned adrift into the world from our Anglo-Indian schools and colleges is perfectly appalling. Puffed up with a notion of superiority to the rest of their countrymen, they are no longer content to apply themselves to the industrial pursuits of their forefathers but demand employment more suited to the educational aroma with which they are imbued. Failing this, they spread abroad over the land, diffusing a feeling of discontent wherever they settle down, and stirring up disaffection to the very Government whose fond weakness has given them whatever strength they possess".⁴⁰

In that same year when the *Englishman* made these comments, official reaction to the spread of higher education began. It was presumably provoked by the fact that in 1869 three Indians had successfully competed in the civil service examination.⁴¹ If more money were spent on higher education, many more Indians would be able to enter the civil service, hitherto a European preserve. In May, 1870 the *Supplement* to the *Gazette of India* carried a resolution by the Government of India in the Finance Department, dated 31 March, 1870. After having referred to the resolution of 8 September, 1869 which spoke about the withdrawal of the financial assistance by the State for the instruction of the people of Bengal in the English language, the resolution of 31 March, 1870 went further to declare that the motives which induced the people to seek instruction in the English language were *prima facie* sufficient for rapid development without any contribution from the Imperial finances whereas the desire for vernacular education required much artificial stimulus and encouragement. Therefore "it should in accordance with the view expressed by successive Secretaries of State, the constant aim of the Supreme and the local Governments ... to reduce to the utmost the charge upon the

40. *Englishman*, Calcutta, 28 February, 1870.

41. All the three were Bengalees. They were Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Bihari Lal Gupta and Surendra Nath Banerjea, see p. 20 in Joges C. Bose, *Surendra Nath Banerjea*. Also O' Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-10.

state for English education in view of rendering it as self-supporting as possible".⁴²

The publication of this resolution was the signal for an agitation in Bengal which was unprecedented in intensity and magnitude. Without government assistance most of the Indian high schools and colleges which mostly drew their students from the middle and lower income groups and depended for their existence on the grants-in-aid system, would have closed down. The Bengali press raised the cry of "higher education in danger" and in view of the magnificent agitation carried out by the British Indian Association at Calcutta and in the mofussil, the Government had to withdraw and had to assure the people by explaining away its resolution that it had no intention of stopping its assistance to higher education. While the government had been nursing the wounds inflicted by this temporary defeat, the English press owned and managed by the Europeans, carried out a strong agitation against the *Raj's* policy of supporting higher education. They pointed to the existence of a reaction against it among the Englishmen in India and at home including those who had earlier supported the spread of English education in India⁴³ and openly declared that the time would soon come when the Government of India would have to revise its policy respecting English education.

However, that time for revising its policy towards English education did not come until the end of the 1870s when an All-India Movement broke out on the issue of reducing the maximum age from 21 to 19 at which the Indian civil service examination could be taken by the candidates. This reduction by Lord Salisbury in 1876 was primarily aimed at making it more difficult for educated Indians to come and compete at London. The educated Indians had earlier in 1866 opposed the reduction of the maximum age limit from 22 to 21 as being highly prejudicial to their chances and as such they could not be expected later to welcome this drastic reduction of 1876. They looked upon it as a clever manoeuvre on the part of the British *Raj* to thwart their ambition for entering the civil service and under

42. *Supplement to the Gazette of India*, 7 May, 1870, pp. 715-17.

43. See below.

the leadership of Surendra Nath Banerjea decided to organise a national protest invoking the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 where the rights of the Indians for service in the administration, irrespective of class, creed, caste and colour had been acknowledged. On 24 March, 1877, a public meeting was held at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, and a committee consisting of the representatives of all sections of the Indian community in Calcutta was appointed to draw up a memorial drawing attention to the principles and pledges contained in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 and forward it to Parliament. Surendra Nath Banerjea was deputed to travel all over the country in order to mobilize support in favour of the memorial and in April, 1879 Lal Mohan Ghose was deputed by the Indian Association to go to Britain as its delegate in order to lay before the British public the grievances of the Indian people on the civil service and other questions.⁴⁴ The civil service agitation of 1877-79 which received the warmest support from the educated Indians throughout the country was organised and co-ordinated with such extreme care and constitutional manner that it drew admiration from the Europeans also. "The really remarkable feature of the whole movement," wrote the *Times of India* on 24 December 1877, "is the moderation, the good sense, and political tact which have distinguished it from first to last. ... A race that can conduct a political campaign with such ability has already won half the battle."⁴⁵

The gradual adoption and extension of Western ideas of agitation and organisation by the educated Indians posed a "real danger to our rule in India", as Hamilton pointed out decades later to Curzon.⁴⁶ There was, therefore, a genuine ground for alarm for the Government of India from the educated Indians, particularly, if it did not revise its policy towards English education. "The present system", wrote James Johnston, in his *Our Educational Policy in India*, in 1880 "is raising up a number of discontented and disloyal subjects".⁴⁷

44. S. N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, p. 40 et seq.

45. *Times of India*, Bombay, 24 December, 1877.

46. Hamilton to Curzon, 29 September, 1899, *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1.

47. Quoted in *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, p. 150.

And surprisingly under a liberal Viceroy, Lord Ripon,⁴⁸ it took the most bold step when it appointed the first Education Commission in 1882 to review the whole field of primary and secondary education in India. Its President, Sir William Hunter felt that the Government aided education was producing a revolt among the educated Indians against three principles which represented "the deepest wants of human nature—the principles of discipline, the principle of religion, the principle of contentment".⁴⁹ So on the recommendations of the Commission, the Government financially withdrew from the field of higher education, mainly as a measure of economy and encouraged private enterprise in the field.⁵⁰ The real reason for such withdrawal was, however, more political than economical. As Ripon in his Convocation Address at Bombay in 1884 implied it rather sympathetically : "It seems to me, I must confess, that it is little short of folly that we should have thrown open to increasing numbers the rich stores of Western learning ; that we should inspire them with European ideas, and bring them into the closest contact with English thought, and that then we should, as it were, pay no heed to the growth of those aspirations which we have ourselves created, and the pride of those ambitions we have ourselves called forth."⁵¹

However, as the government moved out of the field of higher education, Indians moved in and higher education instead of showing any signs of decline went on expanding every year. In 1881, for example, the number of colleges was 85, in 1886 it became 110 and in 1893 it rose to 156. Similarly the number of students in these colleges rose from 7,582 in 1881 to 10,538 in 1886 and 18,571 in 1893. Thus in a decade following the withdrawal of the government support from the field of higher

48. For details about his administration, see S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*.

49. For details, see the *Report of the Indian Education Commission*. Also quoted in Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Growth of Nationalism in India*, p. 125.

50. *The Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882-3*.

51. Quoted in *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, p. 152.

education, the number of colleges almost doubled,⁵² that of the college students nearly trebled. The number of secondary schools also rose but not to the same extent. It rose, for example, from 4,122 in 1881 to 5,097 in 1893, nearly 25 per cent in twelve years. The number of students, on the other hand, increased from 2.22 lakhs to 5.11 lakhs during the same period.⁵³ Finally, the emergence of two new universities, one at Lahore in 1882 and the other at Allahabad in 1887, clearly indicated the tremendous expansion of higher education that the 1880s had witnessed.⁵⁴

The expansion of higher education in India in the decades following the Hunter Commission was accompanied by a similar explosion of the problem of unemployment among the educated Indians. One solution of the problem could have been the establishment of technical schools as suggested by a District Officer in Bihar in 1882-83. "Unless technical schools are provided as outlets, the mere scholastic element will breed political discontent."⁵⁵ But the Government feared that this could aggravate the already existing problem of the educated unemployed since industrial establishments were far too limited in number and there was little demand for technicians. In the existing Indian industries—cotton and jute mills, certain coal mines and iron foundries—senior technical and managerial

52. In Bengal alone, between 1882 and 1893, seven new colleges came into existence. See J. Ghosh, *Higher Education in Bengal under British Rule*, p. 165.
53. The data for this information is collected from (a) *Report of the Hunter Commission*, Ch. VI, pp. 256-312. (b) *Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education*, 1886 by A. Croft, pp. 136-60 and 161-194, 1887/8 to 1891/2; by A. M. Nash, pp. 51-83 and 85-132 and 1892/3 and 1896/7; by J. S. Cotton, pp. 70-115 and 121-170. (c) *Statistical Abstracts relating to British India* from 1877/8 to 1886/7 and 1891/2 to 1900/1, see Tables under Education. (d) *Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress & Condition of India*, 1881/2, 1886/7, & 1893/4, see under Education.
54. For the interesting documents leading to the emergence of these two universities, see J. P. Naik, *Development of University Education, 1860-1887*.
55. *Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India*, during the year 1882-83, p. 148.

staffs were recruited from England and the government feared a stiff competition if technical education was made available to the Indians. In a resolution of 18 June, 1888 the government clarified its policy : "In India at the present time the application of capital to industry has not been developed to the extent which in European countries has rendered the establishment of technical schools on a large scale an essential requisite of success. But the extension of railways, the introduction of mills and factories, the expansion of external trade and the enlarged intercourse with foreign markets, ought in time to lead to the same results in India as in other countries, and create a demand for skilled labour and for educated foremen, supervisors and managers. It may be conceded that the effect of these various influences on an Asiatic people is very gradual, and that it would be premature to establish technical schools on such a scale as in European countries and thereby aggravate the present difficulties by adding to the educated unemployed, a new class of professional men for whom there is no commercial demand".⁵⁶ In January, 1889 Lord Lansdowne drew pointed attention to the problem of unemployment when he addressed the University of Calcutta as its Chancellor : "I am afraid we must not disguise from ourselves that if our schools and colleges continue to educate the youth of India at the present rate, we are likely to hear even more than we do at present of the complaint that we are turning out every year an increasing number of youngmen whom we have provided with an intellectual equipment admirable in itself but practically useless to them on account of the small number of openings which the professions afford for gentlemen who have received this kind of education".⁵⁷

56. Robert I. Crane, "Technical Education and Economic Development in India before World War I" in C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bowman, eds., *Education and Economic Development*, pp. 167-68, 180-1. Also see *Papers Relating to Technical Education in India, 1886-1904*, p. 36 ; K. D. Bhargava, ed., *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India*, Vol. IV, p. 86.

57. Marquis of Lansdowne's Convocation Address at Calcutta on 19 January, 1889, see *University of Calcutta Convocation Addresses*, Vol. 2, p. 579.

The growing unemployment among the educated Indians and the latter's disillusionment with the British *Raj's* policy towards the problem was increasingly adding fuel to the nationalistic sentiments that had been growing ever since the middle of the nineteenth century. Bound together by common backgrounds, common occupations, and common grievances against the official system, the new educated class began to write in English dailies and to meet in associations to demand Indian rights, especially those of representation and employment.⁵⁸ In 1885 when the Indian National Congress, which Hume saw as a safety-valve to the growing discontent with the alien rule was formed.⁵⁹ It adopted "wider employment of the people in the public service", as one of "the three important questions" constituting "the chief planks in the Congress platform"⁶⁰ and hardly any annual session of the Indian National Congress took place without discussing the subject of employment and passing resolutions on it.⁶¹ In 1885 at the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay, Dadabhai Naoroji, speaking in support of the fourth resolution of the Congress on holding simultaneous examinations of the civil service in England and in India in accordance with the views of the India Office Committee of 1860, observed : "It is the most important key to our material and moral advancement. All-out political reforms will benefit us but very little indeed if this reform of all reforms is not made. It is the question of poverty or prosperity. It is the question of life and death of India. It is the question of questions."⁶² The Aitchison Commission which met next year to report on the state of public service in India

58. See Briton Martin, Jr., "Lord Dufferin and the Indian National Congress, 1885-88" reprinted from the *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1, November, 1967, pp. 68-96.

59. See Briton Martin, Jr., *New India*, 1885 for the birth of the Indian National Congress.

60. *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Indian National Congress*, on 28 December, 1900. See *Report*, p. 59.

61. See *Proceedings of the Indian National Congresses between 1885 and 1889*.

62. *Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress on 30 December, 1885. Report of the First Indian National Congress*, p. 81.

rejected this demand but provided a scheme for doing "full justice to the claims of natives of India to higher employment in the public service".⁶³ It recommended that the Indian Civil Service should be reduced to *corps d'elite* by limiting its numbers to what was necessary to fill the chief administrative appointments of the government and by transferring a corresponding number of appointments to local governments which were to be separately recruited in each province. The latter service, known as the Provincial Civil Service, should include 108 posts hitherto reserved for the Indian Civil Service and also the higher posts held by the unconvenanted service, which the Commission now abolished. The lower posts of the former unconvenanted service were, however, relegated to a Subordinate Civil Service.⁶⁴ Yet by 1897 only 56 per cent of the total appointments which numbered 25,370 carrying salaries of Rs 75 a month and upwards were held by the Indians, while only 14 per cent of the appointments carrying salaries of Rs 1,000 and upwards "fall to our lot, although the country is ours, the money is ours and the bulk of the populations is ours".⁶⁵ In 1900 Surendra Nath Banerjea quoted figures for Bengal to show how the Government of India was deliberately evading the various pledges and principles made in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 regarding the employment of Indians in the public service. He pointed out that the Indians' share in the higher grades in the Survey and Customs Department, Forest Department and the Postal Department was nil, while out of the 77 appointments in the higher grades in the Opium Department only 8, 2, 4 and 5 were held by the Indians respectively.⁶⁶ "If you look at the statistics

63. See *Report of the Public Service Commission*, 1886-87, for details.

64. *Ibid.* Also see S. C. Ghosh, "Indian Nationalism and the Emergence of the Public Service Commission" in the *UPSC Souvenir Volume*, p. 6.

65. In 1903 Curzon ordered a survey of appointments for a period of 36 years from 1867 through 1897 to 1903. Surendra Nath Banerjea commented on this at the Twentieth Indian National Congress at Bombay in 1904. *Report*, pp. 63-64.

66. *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Indian National Congress*, on 28 December, 1900 ; see *Report*, pp. 61-2.

connected with these Departments", Banerjea observed, "You will find that the higher offices, the bulk of the higher offices—I should not be guilty of the smallest exaggeration if I say that at least 90 per cent of the higher offices—are filled by Europeans and Anglo-Indians. ...Imperialists, somebody says, they may be imperialists or not but at any rate, these Departments constitute the close preserve, the absolute monopoly of these gentlemen. We are excluded. And why? Because of our race. Our colour is our disqualification".⁶⁷

While all the "discontented B.A.s and M.A.s" no doubt shared Banerjea's feeling against the employment policy of the British *Raj*, a section of them had grown so disillusioned as to advocate militant nationalism. As a matter of fact, in the last decade of the nineteenth century the difficulties of outlets and occupations for the educated Indians had become more severe than in the decade preceeding it and with the emergence of a new set of leaders like Tilak, Rai and Pal, they were in no mood to put up with the *Raj*,⁶⁸ and in Bengal, the extremist challenge began with Aurobindo's fierce attack on the Congress in 1893.⁶⁹ Next year Alfred Croft reported in his Convocation Address at Calcutta in 1894 that lack of any suitable openings for those who had just been able to take their degrees as well as those who had failed was posing a grave problem. Quoting from Bacon's *Of Seditions and Troubles*, he underlined the danger by warning that one of the chief causes of discontent was "when more are bred scholars than preferment can take off".⁷⁰ In 1897 in the last year of Lord Elgin's Viceroyalty when Bombay was threatened with an outbreak of plague, two well-educated young men, Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar, murdered Rand, the Collector and Plague Officer of Poona and his associate, Lt. Ayerst.⁷¹ As a reaction to the Poona murders, the *Raj* passed in 1898 the "Sedition Law"—thereby committing

67. *Proceeding of the Sixteenth Indian National Congress*, on 28 December, 1900; see *Report*, pp. 61-2.

68. For details, see A. Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*. Also A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p. 325 *et seq.*

69. S. R. Mehrotra, "The Early Indian National Congress, 1885-1918", in B. R. Nanda, ed., *Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 55.

70. *University of Calcutta Convocation Addresses*, Vol. 2, pp. 735-6.

71. M. N. Das, *Indian Under Morley and Minto*, p. 105.

"the blunder of connecting sedition with the spread of education", as R. C. Dutta later pointed out in his presidential address at the Lucknow Congress on 27 December 1899.⁷² After going through the papers leading to the Poona murders,⁷³ Hamilton found it impossible to dissociate these young men's idea and hatred of England from the course of education and training through which they had passed.⁷⁴ Hamilton and his advisers regarded the Ferguson College at Poona where Damodar and Balkrishna had studied as the mainspring of a small but deep rooted political conspiracy in the Deccan.⁷⁵

Hamilton's views on the Poona murders thus climaxed the sentiments of those British officials who had since the early 1870s been pondering over the utility of spreading English education in India.⁷⁶ Gustave Le Bon, a French archaeologist who visited India in the early 1880s, commented that English education was not at all suitable for the Indians who had a strong traditional culture. The latter could not satisfy the wants created by the English education and so the English educated wrote to the Indian press with bitter attacks on the *Raj*. The "Babus", as he called the English educated Indians in Bengal, were the enemies of the *Raj* and it was silly to rule the country through them : "Le pire ennemi de l'Angleterre placé sur le trône des Indes n'aurait pas porté à la métropole un plus grave préjudice".⁷⁷ In the decades following the birth of the Indian National Congress, it was increasingly realised that the *Raj*'s decision to promote English education since the days of Macaulay was "a story of grave political miscalculation" containing a lesson "that has its significance for other nations which have undertaken a similar enterprise".⁷⁸ English education which was identified with higher education in India had given birth to a tone of mind and to a type of

72. See *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifteenth Indian National Congress* held at Lucknow on 27 December, 1899, p. 10.

73. The murderers were executed.

74. Hamilton to Curzon, 11 October, 1899, *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1.

75. Hamilton to Curzon, 10 August, 1899, *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1.

76. See below.

77. Gustave Le Bon, *Les Civilisations de L'Inde*, pp. 707-12.

78. See Sir Alfred C. Lyall's Introduction to Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest*, pp. XIII-XVI.

character that was "ill regulated, averse from discipline, discontented, and in some cases actually disloyal". In short, it had raised "a fighting cock" while it was expected to raise "an innocuous hen". As Curzon later declared in connection with his scheme for educational reform at a conference at Simla : "When Erasmus was reproached with having laid the egg from which came forth the Reformation, 'Yes', he replied : 'But I laid a hen's egg, and Luther had hatched a fighting cock'. This, I believe, is pretty much the view of a good many critics of English education in India".⁷⁹

Needless to say that Curzon himself fully subscribed to this view. Since it was now too late to lament Macaulay's decision or for that matter Bentinck's decision of spreading English education in India, the best that could be done at the moment was to devise means to arrest its further progress. One of the means could have been to divert the attention of the young Indians from Western education to Oriental education which Annie Besant's Hindu College at Benares proposed to impart now by undertaking the task of giving religious and moral education on "Hindu lines to its youths".⁸⁰ Hamilton who was too willing to "encourage" Besant's scheme of education⁸¹ saw in the Western education a real danger to the British rule in India, though he miscalculated the time. As he wrote to Curzon in connection with Besant's Hindu College, "I think the real danger to our rule in India, not now but say 50 years hence, is the gradual adoption and extension of Western agitation and organisation ; and if we could break the Hindu educated party into two sections holding widely different views, we should, by such a division, strengthen our position against the subtle and continuous attack which the spread of education make upon our present system of Government."⁸² Another means would be, as had been unsuccessfully done by the govern-

79. See for details, Curzon's inaugural speech at the Conference at Simla in *Home Education A Progs.*, October, 1901, No. 19, Appendix A, p. 12.

80. Besant to Curzon, 17 January, 1899, Letter No. 18. *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 7.

81. Hamilton to Curzon, 20 September, 1899, *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1.

82. Hamilton to Curzon, 20 September 1899, Letter No. 47, *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 1.

ment before in the 1870s and 1880s,⁸³ to alter the priorities in education. Anything, Hamilton remarked rather gloomily, would be better than expansion of purely literary education, "joy of the Babu and anglicised Brahmin", which "produces a wholesale mass of discontented individual who, if they cannot find government employment spend their time in abusing the government which has educated them".⁸⁴ Curzon who was not too happy with Besant's scheme for its association with "not merely active but disloyal politicians" though Besant "herself had no political motives"⁸⁵ realised that the second course would be perhaps the best course he could adopt in slowing down what Hamilton had later described in his *Reminiscences* as the "Educational Juggernaut"⁸⁶ by bringing higher education under effective government control.⁸⁷

This was exactly what was done by Curzon when he passed the Indian Universities Act in March, 1904. How he planned to effect this reform was disclosed to Hamilton as early as August 1901, after allowing himself sufficient time to study the university question in India including the appointment of his friend, Raleigh, as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, then the largest among the five existing universities in India. Curzon wrote : "I think it very likely that in the case of the universities for the reform of which we shall almost inevitably be compelled to resort to legislation, I shall have to appoint a small preliminary commission to go round and take evidence at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, and allow the instructed M.A.s and B.A.s who swarm at these capitals to have their say in advance. ... Such a situation as the present with a Chancellor and a Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University in the persons of myself and Raleigh who are both Fellows

83. Hamilton to Curzon, 20 September 1899, Letter No. 47, *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 1.

84. Hamilton to Curzon, 13 August, 1899. *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1. Also quoted in David Dilks, *Curzon in India*, Vol. 2, p. 244.

85. Curzon to Hamilton, 30 August, 1899. Letter no. 38, *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 1.

86. G. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, Vol. 1, p. 278.

87. Hamilton to Curzon, 18 May, 1899, *Hamilton Papers*, Reel No. 1.

of an Oxford College and strongly imbued with the university feeling, is probably not likely to occur again for a long time in India. It would be a pity not to take advantage of it to carry out reforms which everyone admits to be essential, which nobody hitherto has dared to touch ; but which I think that I have the strength of position to carry through. If left alone to develop upon the present lines the Indian universities will ere long develop into nurseries of discontented characters and stunted brains. There are many, many indeed who say that the effect has already been produced”⁸⁸.

88. Curzon to Hamilton, 28 August, 1901, Letter No. 59, *Curzon Papers*, Reel No. 2.

Education Of Women And Girls, 1813-1947*

Despite the fact that Rs 1 lakh was sanctioned by the 43rd clause of the Charter Act of 1813 for the education of the people of India, including improvement of native literature and encouragement of native talent,¹ the East India Company did almost nothing for the cause of the education of women and girls in India till the mid-nineteenth century. During all these years education of women was mainly a concern of the missionaries who were permitted to come to British India since 1813² and of the few philanthropic individuals³ who, for reasons other than those which guided the missionary activities in education, showed an interest in the matter.

* The paper was written on an invitation from the History of Education Society in Great Britain to participate in its annual conference on the education of women and girls at Avery Hill College, London, during 14-16, December, 1984.

1. For details, see H. Sharp (ed.), *Selections from Educational Records, Part I, 1781-1839*, p. 22.
2. For details about the educational activities of the missionaries in this respect, see M. A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal, 1793-1837*.
3. Monier Williams, *Modern India and the Indians*, p. 324.

However, the initiative in this matter was first taken by the British and Foreign School Society of London. In consultation with its agent, Harington and William Ward of the Baptist Missionary Society at Serampore, the Society in 1821, decided to depute Miss Mary Ann Cooke to open schools for girls under the auspices of the Calcutta School Society set up in 1818 following the foundation of the Hindu School in 1817. The high-caste Hindu families would not permit Miss Cooke to enter into their inner apartments nor would they openly send their daughters to schools for education. This, as well as lack of adequate funds, led Miss Cooke to abandon the plan and she started her work under the Church Missionary Society. Raja Radhakanta Deb, though a prominent leader of the Hindu Orthodox Society, welcomed the idea and wrote to the President of the Calcutta School Society : "It would be a very helpful matter if the women who belong to respectable families but are poor, get from her some training in practical works along with general education. Such educated ladies will be qualified to be appointed subsequently as home tutoresses in prominent Hindu families. At this there would be no encroachment of the time honoured customs and practices of the Hindus, but there would be spread of education among the women."⁴

In 1826, Miss Cooke, who after her marriage with Rev. Issac Wilson had become Mrs. Wilson, had 30 schools and 600 pupils under her charge, which were concentrated in 1828 into a Central school in Calcutta under a committee called the Ladies Society for Native Female Education.⁵ Other similar schools in Bombay and Madras had also been established by the London and the Church Missionary Society but the picture of female education was not very encouraging in the British India except in the Punjab. The first report of the Board of Administration in the Punjab pointed out that female education which was "almost unknown in other parts of India" was to be found in all parts of the Punjab. There were also female teachers and female pupils who were drawn from all the

4. Quoted in Priscilla Chapman, *Hindoo Female Education*, pp. 75-79.

5. Arthur Howell, *Education in British India* quoted in J. A. Richey ed., *Selections from Educational Records, Part II, 1840-59*, p. 46.

communities—Hindu, Muslim and Sikh.⁶ In other parts of British India the missionary efforts by the end of 1850 accounted for only 284 day schools with 8,919 girls and 86 boarding schools with 2,274 girls in the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the North-Western Provinces.⁷

However, with all their efforts, the missionaries were unable to attract the girls from the upper stratum of the Indian society. They were prompted to work for the spread of education among Indian girls mostly out of a religious consideration and the bulk of the students came from the lower classes whose poverty and degradation rendered them invulnerable so far as literacy was concerned. The parents were often provided with financial incentives into sending their daughters to missionary schools and the girls themselves were often attracted by the temptation of getting clothes and other presents.⁸ In 1833, William Adam reported that he had seen in the district of Burdwan 175 girls in four female schools—138 of them Hindus and the rest except one who was a Muslim were either “daughters of Native Christian parents or orphans rescued from starvation and supported by the Missionaries”. All the 138 Hindu girls belonged to the lower castes—*Bagdis*, *Muchis*, *Bauris*, *Domes*, *Haries*, *Tantis*, *Chandals*.⁹ Not a single girl came from the upper caste.

The upper caste Hindus did not send their daughters to missionary schools because they disliked the religious considerations which had led them to open schools for girls. The Eastern ideal of female life was one of strict purity, seclusion and quiet domestic duty, and the literature of the classical languages of India was far too corrupt to allow of any teaching in it compatible with such an ideal. Besides, as Adam pointed out in his reports on vernacular education that a feeling was alleged to exist in the majority of Hindu females, principally cherished

6. *Dalhousie Papers* 201, p. 143, para 376. (*Dalhousie Papers* were consulted at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, when this author was a Post-doctoral Fellow in History, Edinburgh University, during 1968-70).

7. *Calcutta Review*, Calcutta, 1851, p. 242.

8. For details, see K. P. Sengupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal, 1793-1833*.

9. William Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal*, 1835 and 1838 ed. by Anathnath Basu, p. 305.

by the women and not discouraged by the men, that a girl taught to read and write would, soon after marriage, become a widow and the belief was generally entertained that intrigue was facilitated by a knowledge of letters on the part of females. The Mohammedans participated in all the prejudices of the Hindus against the instruction of their female off-springs.¹⁰ In these circumstances it was felt by the East India Company that any scheme of female education would be "looked upon by the masses with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mohammedans."¹¹ And "the natives" would rise against any attempt to "submit their women folk to the equalising and emancipating influence of public instruction".¹² The Government, therefore, "purposely abstained from acting towards its female subject as it acted towards male" in the field of education.¹³ This is evident from the fact that in none of the general despatches relating to educational matters submitted to or received from the Court of Directors during the first half of the nineteenth century is there any reference to the education of Indian girls and women.

The failure of the missionary schools to attract girls from upper caste Hindu families led J. E. D. Bethune, Legal Member of the Governor-General's Council to establish, as he wrote later to Dalhousie on 29 March 1850, a school for girls on "the principle of excluding from it all religious teaching ... English was to be taught to those only whose parents wished it, all were to be instructed in Bengali and in plain and fancy work".¹⁴ The school was opened on 7 May 1849 and Bethune in his long opening speech stressed the need to extend the benefits of education to women, after more than thirty years since the process to educate men had started, to produce not only accomplished wives but also good mothers. He rightly pointed out that "the character of a nation" depended "intimately on the character of its women" and added that the degradation of the female

10. William Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal*, 1835 and 1838 ed. by Anathnath Basu, p. 187.
11. Minute of J. H. Littler on Female Education, 2 April, 1850 in Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 57.
12. A. Mayhew, *The Education of India*, p. 97.
13. Monier Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
14. Bethune to Dalhousie, 29 March 1850 in Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 52.

sex now adhered to by all communities "did not characterise the earliest and most flourishing periods of Hindu history" and was brought in, "as I believe, by a courtly imitation of your Mohammedan invaders".¹⁵ However, he made it clear to Dalhousie that his position in the Council of India and as President of the Council of Education put him in an advantageous position to "discover whether my belief was well founded that the time has come when this important step in the system of education of the Native can be taken with a reasonable hope of success. I wished the discredit of failure to rest with myself alone, if my expectation had proved abortive and that the credit of the Government should not be pledged to the measure until its success was assured".¹⁶ Dalhousie approved of the course since he believed that "no single change in the habits of the people" was likely to lead to more important and beneficial consequences than the introduction of education for their female children"¹⁷ and encouraged him to preserve the institution in the face of the strong local opposition created by some disgruntled orthodox Indians. "I truly believe that you have planted the grain of mustard seed," he wrote to Bethune, "and that it will one day be a great tree which you and those whom we serve may be proud to look upon."¹⁸

Dalhousie's belief was not unfounded. Within one year, despite all intimidations to his institution, the number of its pupils had risen from 11 to 30 and it had encouraged many enlightened Indians to found similar female schools at Uttara para, Barasat, Neebudhia, Sooksagar and Jessore.¹⁹ Since all these institutions were always facing intimidations, Bethune requested Dalhousie to issue a declaration on the part of Government "that it looks on them with a favourable eye".²⁰ This was

15. Bethune's opening speech has been given in full in the Appendix to *Bethune School & College Centenary Volume, 1849-1949* ed. by Kalidas Nag, pp. 107-12.
16. Bethune to Dalhousie, 29 March, 1850. Richey, ed. *op cit.*, p. 52.
17. The Government of India to the Government of Bengal, 11 April, 1850. See Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 59.
18. Dalhousie to Bethune, 2 June, 1849. *Dalhousie Papers* 101, Letter No. 65.
19. Bethune to Dalhousie, 29 March, 1850. Quoted in Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 52-4.
20. *Dalhousie Papers* 22/26.

readily done by the Government since Bethune had indeed done a "great work in the first successful introduction of Native Female Education in India on a sound and solid foundation" and had earned "a right not only to the gratitude of the Government but to its frank and cordial support".²¹ However, the Court of Directors declined Bethune's suggestion sent through the Government, that Her Majesty the Queen Victoria should be the patroness to his school at Calcutta on the ground that the present state of female education did not warrant "such unusual proceeding".²²

In August, 1851 Bethune died after suffering for a while from an abscess of the liver, speaking of "his female school as the anxiety that lay nearest to his heart".²³ His original plan was to make over the school to Dalhousie later but changed his plans on the ground of the critical state of his health and wanted to do it now immediately—"otherwise in the case of my death the whole must have been sold under the general powers of my will for the benefit of my sisters."²⁴ Dalhousie was grieved by the untimely death of Bethune but he realised that the experiment of Bethune's school was calculated to break down the prejudices against female education and was most likely to be rendered thoroughly successful if carried on for some time longer "as a private work watched with the closer care".²⁵ So Dalhousie requested his wife, who had shown an interest in the school by a visit to it last year, to take it for the present "under her charge".²⁶ Dalhousie decided to meet the expenses involved in maintaining the school from his own purse. However, since the number of students was likely to rise from 40, as well as monthly expenses from Rs 700, he was anxious that the Government should support it after his

21. The Court of Directors to the Governor General in Council, 4 September 1850. See Richey, ed, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

22. Dalhousie's *Diary*, 1851, Part II, 24 August, 1851. Quoted in M. N. Das, *Studies in the Economic and Social Development of Modern India, 1848-56* p. 305.

23. Bethune to Littler, 10 August, 1851. Quoted in *Ibid.*

24. Dalhousie to Halliday, 21 August, 1851. *Dalhousie Papers* 102, p. 1.

25. Dalhousie's *Diary*, 14 January, 1853. Quoted in M. N. Das *op. cit.*, p. 313.

26. *Dalhousie Papers* 35/36.

departure from India. The Court of Directors wanted to support it at once to relieve Dalhousie of the expenses but the latter politely declined the offer and added that he would look after the institution as long as he remained in India. Only after his departure from India it would go to the care of the Court.²⁷

Thus by supporting Bethune's female school in Calcutta Dalhousie closed the era of official non-interference, and marked "the beginning of that of an open encouragement",²⁸ in the annals of female education in India as pointed out by Richey. And when in October, 1854, the Education Despatch reached the shores of India, it spoke about the subject in paragraph 83 : "The importance of female education in India cannot be overrated ; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. But this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which grants-in-aid may be given and we can not refrain from expressing our cordial sympathy with the efforts which are being made in this direction. Our Governor-General-in-Council has declared in a communication to the Government of Bengal that the Government ought to give to native female education in India its frank and cordial support ; in this we heartily concur and we especially approve of the bestowal of marks of honour upon such native gentlemen as Rao Bhadur Maghuabhai Karramchand, who devoted Rs 20,000 to the foundation of two native female schools in Ahmedabad as by such means our desire for the extension of female education becomes generally known."²⁹

27. Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 47.

28. *Dalhousie Papers* 207, pp. 9-10. For a full description of the Education Despatch of 1854 which consists of 100 paragraphs, see Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 364-393 and for a critical account of the making of the Education Despatch, see S. C. Ghosh "Dalhousie, Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 1854" in Charles Webster, ed., *History of Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 37-47.

29. *Dalhousie Papers*, 207, pp. 9-10. Also Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 388.

After that, the growth of female schools in India was only a question of time. Female schools grew up at Dacca, and at Howrah, which received grants-in-aid. At a few of the vernacular schools in the eastern educational division of Bengal girls were reported to be in attendance. In the Agra district, Mr. Gopal Singh, the Deputy Inspector of Schools, encouraged a movement in furtherance of female education in 1855, which later extended to the districts of Mathura and Mainpuri. In the Bombay Presidency at Poona an association of youngmen had established three female schools and another by a gentlemen residing at Dharwar.³⁰

These schools were attended by girls from higher families. At one school in the eastern educational division of Bengal, the Inspector, Mr. Woodrow, "saw 19 Brahmince girls, all of good parentage". At one of the female schools in Mainpuri, there was an attendance of "32 Mahommedan girls of respectable percentage". As the Acting Educational Inspector of the Deccan Division, Captain Lester remarked : "The prejudices against female education were fast disappearing ... there will be no more difficulty found in establishing female schools than there is in those for boys."³¹ Just as Lord William Bentinck had ventured to attack and had overcome the prejudice against anatomy and European medical science, so Lord Dalhousie was encouraged to introduce into India the European view of the necessity of education for women.³²

II

In 1857, the Mutiny swept the Indian sky and power was transferred from the Company to the Crown. The financial stress as well as the need to approach the social problems in India cautiously slowed down Government's support for female education in India. The reluctance of the Supreme Government

30. Secretary of State for India to the Government of India, 7 April, 1859. See Richey, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 435-6.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 436.

32. For a critical study of Dalhousie's Social Policy which aimed at the emancipation of women, see S. C. Ghosh *Dalhousie In India, 1848-56*, Chapter 3.

to financially support the forty schools for girls opened by Vidyasagar between April 1857, and June 1858 in the neighbouring districts of Calcutta led him to resign his post at the Sanskrit College as its Principal and Special Inspector of Schools. However, the Government soon relieved him of the financial burden involving the payment of salaries to the teachers of the schools and ordered that it be paid by the Government.³³ In 1867, a circular was issued "which practically admitted that Government had no desire to take the initiative in the case of Girls' schools as it had done in the case of boys, but was ready to encourage existing schools by grants-in-aid"³⁴. In 1870, out of £316,509 of public money spent on education in the whole of the Bengal Presidency; a sum of £1,173 was given to Government Girls' schools; and £4,462 to the aided Girls schools; chiefly in the North West and the Punjab; out of £198,182 spent on Bombay; £4,000 was assigned to Government Girls' schools; in Madras the Government did not maintain a single Girls' school.³⁵ In his *Report on Education in India* in 1870-71, A.P. Howell stated that there were then "1,768 Girls' schools which comprise almost all that is at present done for female education in India" by the Government.³⁶

However, despite the lukewarm support provided by the Government for female education in India since 1857, education for girls thrived mainly on the enthusiasm displayed by the various societies that came into being in the wake of the nineteenth century renaissance as well as of a liberal attitude taken by the educated classes towards their wives, sisters and daughters. Between 1851 and 1867, five educational and cultural bodies sprang up, the aims and object of all of those being the promotion of learning through the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures. All were committed to the spread of education among women. The foremost among such societies and *sabhas* were

33. For details about Vidyasagar's contribution to female education, see B. N. Banerjee, "Vidyasagar as a pioneer of Female Education" in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.

34. Monier Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-26.

35. *Ibid.*

36. "Education in British India, 1870-71" by A. P. Howell in *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India*, Vol. 1, p. 387.

the Bethune Society, started in 1851, after Bethune's death, and the *Brahma Sabha* started by Keshab Chandra Sen in April, 1863.³⁷ However, the credit for organizing the first women's *Sabha* in the Bengal Presidency went to the Brahmo youth of Bhagalpur. The *Sabha* called *Bhagalpur Mahila Samiti* was organised a few months before Sen's *Brahma Sabha*.³⁸ Through debates, publication of journals and articles in the newspapers, these *Sabhas* and *Samities* played an important role in spreading education among women and girls.

One event which gave a great fillip to the cause of education of women in India happened in 1882, the year of the Silver Jubilee of the University of Calcutta, when two women candidates from the College Department of Bethune School opened in 1879—Chandramukhi Basu and Kadambini Ganguli—passed the B.A. examination of the Calcutta University and both were allowed to take their B.A. Degrees at the Annual Convocation on 10 March, 1883.³⁹ The Vice-Chancellor, H.G. Reynolds, described this as "the most remarkable event ... of the year, the event which will make the Convocation of today a landmark in the educational history of India ... calculated to give a wide-spread and powerful impulse to the cause of female education throughout India" and further spoke of the "effect which it may produce in paving the way to a general recognition of the *right* of the women of this country to education and of the duty of the men of this country to provide it for them"⁴⁰. In the same year the first Education Commission which met under William Hunter, however, found the picture of female education in British India, quite dismal since 98 per cent of the girls of school-going age were still outside the schools and out of their total population of 99·7 million, less than 99·5 million were unable to read and write. The Commission, therefore, recommended that education of women in India needed to be

37. For details, see Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*; C. Y. Chintamani, *Indian Social Reform* and Sushobhan Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance and other Essays*.

38. K. K. Datta, *A Social History of Modern India*, p. 167.

39. *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, p. 147.

40. *University of Calcutta Convocation Addresses*, Vol. 2, (1880-98) pp. 462, 465.

encouraged by the Government. Government should give liberal aids to existing private Girls' schools, prescribe a simple syllabus in Girls' Primary school, start women's normal schools and organise a separate inspectorate for girls' education.⁴¹

By the end of the nineteenth century female education was making a slow but steady progress. Girls, who got the opportunity for higher education distinguished themselves in it and the number of those who passed the higher examination in Arts in the provinces was also increasing. For example, in Bengal in the five years 1893-97, 193 passed Entrance, 29 F.As, 7 B. As, and 2 M. As.⁴² In the next five years the number in each category except M. As rose—152 passed Entrance, 85 F. As and 37 B. As.⁴³ As in 1893-97, so in 1898-1902, all the B. As were from the Bethune College, Calcutta.⁴⁴ Similar progress in higher education was recorded in Madras, Bombay and the North-Western Provinces. During the Quinquennium from 1892-93 to 1896-97, three women took the M.A. degree from Madras and thirty-seven passed B. A. from Madras, Bombay and the North-Western Provinces.⁴⁵ The position of female education in India by the end of the nineteenth century has thus been summed up by Justice Ranade in his address to the Eleventh National Social Conference at Amaraoti in 1897: "The Bethune College of Calcutta, the Girls' High school at Poona and Ahmedabad, the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Jullunder, the Singh Sabha Girls' school at Lahore, the Maharani's Girls' school at Mysore, the Mahakali Pathsala organised by Mataji Tapaswini Bai, a Maratha Lady in Calcutta and the Sylhet and Mymensing Unions, all show a record of progress each in its own line of development. There is no single Reform Association of any position in the country which has not lent its best

41. *Report of the Indian Education Commission*, 1882, see under Female Education, No. 1 *et seq.* Also see J. C. Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, p. 24.

42. *Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education*, 1883 to 1897.

43. *Ibid.*, 1898 to 1902.

44. For details, see Jogesh C. Bagal, "History of the Bethune School & College" in Kalidas Nag. ed. *Bethune School & College Centenary Volume*. p. 54 *et seq.*

45. Y. B. Mathur, *Women's Education in India, 1813-1966*, p. 53, footnote.

efforts to raise the standard, popularise the system of female education in the country.”⁴⁶

The *Kanya Mahavidyalaya* mentioned in Ranade's address proved to be a great success because of “the public spirit and zeal of its founder Lal Deva Raja of Jullunder”. The curriculum of this college included music, domestic economy, cooking, needle-work, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, History, Geography, Mathematics and Political economy.⁴⁷ Besides, the coming up the institutions specially for women's higher education in the country, some well-known colleges for men threw their doors open to girls and thus helped the cause of higher education among women. The Fergusson College at Poona and the Willingdon College at Sangli—both in the Bombay Presidency—were two of the many important examples in this regard.

The First Education Resolution of the Government of India which reviewed the progress of female education in India considered the rate of progress to be “slow”. By the end of 1901-1902, the number of female scholars in public schools was 444,470 or less than a ninth of the number of male scholars. The percentage of girls in public schools to the total female population of school-going age had risen from 1.59 in the year 1886-87 to 2.49 in 1901-1902.⁴⁸ The Resolution decided to implement the Education Commission's recommendation for the extension of female education with the increase of the funds assigned in aid of education. “The measures which are now being taken for further advance”, so spoke the Resolution, “include the establishment of important centres of model primary Girls' schools, an increase in the number of training schools, with more liberal assistance to those already in existence, and a strengthening of the staff of inspectresses. The direct action of the Government will be exerted in cases where that of the municipalities and local boards does not suffice”.⁴⁹ The

46. Quoted in K. K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

47. See D. K. Karve, *My Twenty Years in the Cause of Indian Women*, pp. 30-32,

48. *Indian Educational Policy* : Being a Resolution issued by the Governor-General in Council, on the 11th March 1904, p. 27, para, 27.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

Resolution also appreciated the service rendered by missionary effort to the cause of female education and in the higher grades by *zenana* teaching.⁵⁰

It will be interesting to note that the Resolution did not say anything about the higher education of women which had made a promising start in institutions like Bethune College. This was not unnatural since the Education Resolution was announced just on the eve of the passing of the Indian Universities Act of March, 1904, which was designed to check the spread of higher education in India.⁵¹ However, private enterprise continued to show great enthusiasm for higher education of women and this was climaxed by the creation of a Women's University in Western India in 1916. The nucleus of this university was a Hindu Widows' Home which Dhondo Keshav Karve opened in Poona in 1899. Its aim was "to give high caste Hindus an interest in life, by training them to become self-supporting as teachers, midwives or nurses". The education imparted in this Home began to attract non-widows also and so a girls' school, the *Mahila Vidyalaya*, was established in March, 1907 to prepare them to become "good wives, good mothers and good neighbours". In 1915, the two institutions, which were separate were amalgamated and success in educational work encouraged Karve to establish an Indian Women's University soon. A pamphlet containing an account of Japan's Women University sent to Karve by Shiva Prasad Gupta of Benares and Benoy Kumar Sarkar of Calcutta after their tour in Japan in 1915 further encouraged him. The National Social Conference of Bombay announced the idea and as decided by the Provisional Committee, the first meeting of this University was held in the Fergusson College, Poona, on 3 June, 1916 and the University started functioning with R. G. Bhandarkar as its first Chancellor, R. P. Paranjpye as its first Vice-Chancellor and four students. The *Vidyalaya* and the schools which had sprung up around the Home were affiliated to this University. It was indeed the first "free" university for women in India,

50. *Indian Educational Policy* : Being a Resolution issued by the Governor General in Council, on the 11th March, 1904, p. 27, para. 27.

51. For details, see S. C. Ghosh, *Indian Nationalism : A Case Study for the First University Reform by the British Raj*.

being completely independent of Government and receiving no grant from it.⁵²

In October, 1915, a memorial on the Education of Girls and Women in India was presented to J. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, by a deputation of English and Indian ladies. The Memorial pointed out, among others, the insignificant number of girls under instruction and the disparity between the male and the female population in this respect and its effect on the society in India. Chamberlain while welcoming the deputation observed that he was "not unsympathetic" to those who felt that "the future of their country must largely depend upon the satisfactory progress of women's education in that country" though "the particular moment" for such a memorial was not "a happy one" and the question could not be considered "now".⁵³

However, as Chamberlain had hoped "a movement of this kind must begin in India",⁵⁴ it began with an increasing activity among the women themselves for the spread of education among the girls. The first meeting of the Bengal Women's Education League which was held in February, 1927, drew up a programme for women's education and set up a Standing Committee to implement it.⁵⁵ In Bombay the first All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform was convened at Poona in January, 1927. It requested the Government to make primary education compulsory for girls and to provide suitable physical training and inspection. The Rani Saheb of Sangli correctly observed at the Conference : "There was a time when the education of girls had not only no supporters but open enemies in India. Female Education has, by now, gone through all the stages—total apathy and indifference, ridicule, criticism and acceptance. It may now be safely stated that everywhere in India, the need for the education of girls as much as of boys

52. For details, see D. K. Karve, *Looking Back*, p. 93 *et seq.* Also see Y. B. Mathur, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8 which gives an account of this university till 1966.

53. See Appendix I and Appendix II in Y. B. Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 155 *et seq.*

54. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

55. K. K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

is recognised as a cardinal need of progress—a *sine qua non* of national development.”⁵⁶

On the Government's side, the Calcutta University Commission which met in 1919 suggested that the demand for education among women could not be met simply by extending the system of education for boys to them. It needed “soon special organisation or organisations” and recommended constitution of a board for devising the method, curricula and organisation of women's education.⁵⁷

In 1921, as a result of Montford Reforms, education became a responsibility of the Provincial Government⁵⁸ and provinces began to take an increasing interest in the subject of female education. In August, 1927, a conference of the gazetted women officers of the Education Department of Madras was held and as a result of its deliberations a report for the development of women's education was submitted to the Government next year. In February, 1928, the Punjab Government recognised in a Resolution “the urgent importance” of girls' education. A committee of officials and non-officials, appointed in the Central Provinces, made various recommendations to the Government and expressed the general view that “the advancement of India is bound up with the education of girls and unless active measures are taken to further their education and a public demand created, the general progress of the country must be impeded”.⁵⁹

However, there were many handicaps to the progress of women's education and, as the Hartog Committee appointed in 1929 to review education during the decade since 1919 enumerated, some of these were social prejudice, poverty and disease, lack of efficient training and suitably qualified women teachers, inadequate financial support, and the absence of suitable communications to enable the girls to go to their schools easily.⁶⁰

56. *Report of the Proceedings of the All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform Held at Poona*, 5-8 January, 1927, p. 13.

57. For details about the education of girls and women as discussed by the Calcutta University Commission, in 1917-19, see *Report*, Vol. II, Part I, Chapter XIV, pp. 1-36.

58. See S. N. Mukherji, *History of Education in India*, p. 203 *et seq.*

59. Quoted in K. K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

60. See, for details, *Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (Sir Philip Hartog Committee Report), 1929.

Barring the economic difficulties, the social prejudice started gradually disappearing since the time when education became a provincial responsibility. Despite the recession of 1929, and the outbreak of the Second World War which affected the fortunes of India, the period witnessed a tremendous growth in the education of women mainly because the provinces were able to take more initiative in the promotion of the education of girls and women. While the passing in 1930 of the Sarda Act,⁶¹ which raised the age of marriage for girls to 14, thereby removing one of the most serious obstacles in the way of their education, the Freedom Movement in India contributed no less to the expansion of education of women. Mahatma Gandhi's entry into the politics in India in the second decade of the present century marked a turning point in the awakening of women of India. His appeal to Indian mothers for the country's cause fired their spirit of nationalism. Thousands of Indian ladies came out of the *purdah*, and suffered the same hardships as men did, whether it was in facing the *lathi* charge by police, imprisonment or for breaking intolerable laws. All the women's organisations formed since 1917 in the wake of the national consciousness among them took up education of women and amelioration of their social position as important programme.

The following table will illustrate this growth in the education of women and girls during the period when education became a provincial responsibility :

Education of Women and Girls

1921-22 to 1946-47

<i>Institutions</i>	1921-22	1931-32	1941-42	1946-47
Primary Schools	1,087,131	1,944,070	3,123,643	2,715,230
Secondary Schools	124,954	196,170	410,333	442,503
Professional Schools	19,570	17,568	40,869	38,375
Arts & Science Colleges	1,207	20,685	11,778	16,284
Professional Colleges	266	521	1,725	2,468

61. The Act named often Rai Saheb Harbilas Sarda who piloted the Child Marriage Bill evoked much opposition among the conservative sections of the people.

The most interesting feature of these recent educational statistics in the above Table⁶² has been the relative quickness of intellectual awakening among women, as illustrated by the trebling of girls scholars in schools and colleges between 1921 and 1941 as the number of boys during the same period. Yet the gap between their education and that of men was still very wide. For every 100 boys in a Primary School, there were only 36 girls while in the Middle School and the Secondary School stages the corresponding figures were 22 and 14 respectively. And finally for every 100 boys in a university, there were only 7 girls.⁶³ It was left to the Government of the Republic of India to reduce this gap and to create a special machinery to look after the female education by appointing within the next decade the National Committee on Women's Education under the Chairmanship of Shrimati Durgabai Deshmukh.⁶⁴

III

It is clear from the above that education of women and girls in British India was more the result of an enlightenment among the Indians than that of any special endeavour by the Government for it. Initially the Government was reluctant to do for the education of women what it had done for the education of men since it believed that this would amount to an interference with the Indian society with consequences detrimental to its interests in India. As a matter of fact when Dalhousie with his progressive ideas came forward to extend the Government's "frank and cordial support" to the institution set up by Bethune, one of the members of his council, Sir John Littler, recorded a dissenting

62. This information has been collected mostly from the *Quinquennial Reviews of the Progress of Education in India*, 1917-22, 1922-27, 1932-37, 1937-42 and 1942-47.
63. *Report of the Committee to Look into the Causes for Lack of Public Support, Particularly in Rural Areas for Girls' Education and to Enlist Public Co-operation.*
64. The Committee which was appointed in May, 1958, submitted its report in January next year. For details, see *Report of the National Committee on Women's Education, 1958-59.*

judgement, "Will it [the support provided to Bethune's school] not involve—a dereliction of the principle of neutrality to which the Government, (I have always understood) is pledged in like cases?"⁶⁵ After the Rising of the Sepoys in 1857, the *Raj's* attitude towards female education in India became too cautious and careful to admit of an open encouragement and support for it.

In these circumstances when the missionary schools failed to attract girls from the respectable families, female education in India depended upon the endeavour of persons like Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Rammohan Roy, J. E. D. Bethune, Ramgopal Ghosh, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Kesab Chandra Sen, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, M. Karamchand, M. G. Ranade, D. K. Karve. Realising as Dalhousie did when he wrote to his old friend, Couper, in 1850, that female education "will do more towards civilising the body of society than anything else could effect",⁶⁶ they included in the agenda of the various societies, *Sabhas* and *Samities*, organised for the amelioration of the conditions of women in India, programmes for female education. Observing this trend, and also observing the lukewarm support provided for the female education by the Government, Monier Williams enthusiastically commented in 1878: "The men will themselves raise their own women. They will throw down the barriers which at present surround their homes. They will tear down *pardahs*, pull down the shutters of their *Zananas*, throw open the doors of their inner apartments, invite us to enter in—entreat us to do for their wives and daughters what we have done for themselves."⁶⁷ Once "the wives and the daughters" were trained, with the growing years the initiative was also gradually taken by the enlightened women themselves for the spread of female education in India. Annie Besant's Women's Indian Association of Madras in 1917, which outlined a national movement for the education of Hindu girls was followed by a host of other women's organizations which worked for the spread of enlighten-

65. See J. A. Richey, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

66. Dalhousie to Couper, 16 April, 1850, J. G. A. Baird, ed., *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, pp. 121-2.

67. Monier Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

ment among women. At the time of independence it was Sarojini Naidu for Bengal, Durgabai Deshmukh for Bombay and S. Muthulakshmi Reddi for Madras⁶⁸, who had been very active for the cause of female education in India.

68. For S. Muthulakshmi's contributions to the cause of education in Tamil Nadu between 1921-47, see Ms. Rajalakshmi Renganathan's JNU Ph. D. thesis, "A Study of the Social, Economical and Political Aspects of the Growth of Higher Education of Women in the Madras Presidency, 1921-47."

5

Science, Technology and Higher Education : An Indian Experience Under The British Raj*

Higher education, in the Western sense of the term, came to India in the second decade of the nineteenth century when by Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813 the East India Company¹ provided "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees" each year out of the surplus territorial revenues² for the "revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."³ It was clear from the debates in Parliament that by "the sciences" was meant Western sciences. However when rupees one lakh was available out of the surplus

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1. The work that still holds the field on the East India Company is by C. H. Philips first published at Manchester in 1940.
2. British territories in India by 1813 consisted of the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras.
3. For details about the Clause 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, see H. Sharp, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, Part I, 1781-1839*, p. 22.

territorial revenues in 1823 and a General Committee of Public Instruction was formed to disburse the expenditure on education, the entire amount of money was spent on the revival of Oriental learning and institutions only. This was because the Committee consisting of ten members was largely dominated by persons with great admiration for Sanskrit and Arabic literature⁴ and they interpreted the relevant clause on education in such a way as to suit their own interests.

Before long the activities of the Committee were opposed both from within and outside it. In the first place, the young men of the three metropolis of British India—Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—were more interested in learning English since a knowledge in the subject helped them to land a job at the lower level of the British establishments open to them. A beginning in learning the language was made in 1817, when the people of Calcutta collaborated with a group of Europeans in setting up the Hindu College at Calcutta, the headquarters of the British *Raj* in India, the foundation of which, according to Howell, “marks an important era in the history of education in India as the first spontaneous desire manifested by the natives in the country for instruction in English and the literature of Europe”.⁵ Six years later in December, 1823, Rammohan Roy⁶ submitted a memorial to the Governor-General urging that the proposals of the Committee for establishing a Sanskrit College at Calcutta should be abandoned and the Government should “promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction ; embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with accessory, books, instruments and other apparatus.”⁷ It is clear from the last few words of the extract from Rammohan’s letter that what he had in mind

4. *Selection from Educational Records, part I, 1781-1839* p. 53, *et seq.*

5. A Howell, *Education in British India prior to 1854 and in 1870-1*, p. 9.

6. Rammohan Roy is now regarded as the Father of Modern India. The best biographical work on him is by S. D. Collet, *Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy*.

7. Sharp has included Rammohan’s letter in his *Selections from Educational Records*, see H. Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 99 *et seq.*

was a provision for the teaching of practical and useful sciences, then taught in Europe. Secondly, there was a growing utilitarian influence at the headquarters of the East India Company in London when James Mill, the able and faithful lieutenant of Jeremy Benham, obtained an appointment in the Examination Department through which passed all important despatches emanating from London. The work which helped Mill to obtain this appointment was the publication of his 3 volume study, *History of British India*⁸ in which he had considered Indian society to be static and stagnant and had suggested its reform on the Benthamite principles by introducing Western science and knowledge as a key to progress. The impact of Mill's ideas could be seen in a despatch of 18 February, 1824, from the Court of Directors : "We apprehend that the plan of the institutions to the improvement of which our attention is now directed was originally and fundamentally erroneous. The great end should not have been to teach Hindu learning, but useful learning."⁹ Finally, within the Committee itself the places of some of the members who had either died or retired were taken up by young men who had grown up in England imbued with the utilitarian philosophy of useful learning¹⁰ and they now began to question the utility of the Committee's work.

It was the coming of two important utilitarians which finally helped to sort out the issue. The first was William Bentinck who at a farewell dinner at Grole's house, just on the eve of his departure for India as Governor-General in December, 1827, had said to James Mill : "I am going to British India but I shall not be Governor-General. It is you that will be Governor-General".¹¹ The second was Thomas Babington Macaulay who came to Bengal in 1834 as the Law Member of Bentinck's Council and who was also appointed for his known intellectual attainments as the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. Macaulay, whose interest in consolidating the

8. The British Museum possesses a copy of Mill's 3 Volume study published in 1817.

9. See Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 91 *et seq.*

10. G. M. Young, *Victorian England*, p. 8.

11. Quoted in J. Bowring, ed., *The Works of Jeremy Benham*, X, pp. 576-7.

British empire by the propagation of English laws and English culture began quite early in his life, grew up, being the son of Zachary Macaulay, in the circle of the Clapham Evangelists.¹² He had never taken part in the debates of the Committee but when the latter asked the Governor-General to take a final decision on the subject of education, he drew up on 2 February, 1835, an elaborate minute championing Western education and science and castigating Oriental literature and learning¹³ to help Bentinck to take a decision. As could be expected, Bentinck's decision was in favour of Western science and education. In a short minute on 7 March, 1835, Bentinck observed : "The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English Education alone."¹⁴ He also demonstrated and implemented his decision by immediately providing for the establishment in June, 1835, a Medical College at Calcutta to teach Medicine and Surgery through English to a group of fifty students of over 20 years of age who were to be known as foundation scholars. Dr. M. J. Bramley was appointed as Superintendent and Drs. H. H. Goodeve and W. B. O'Shaughnessy as Professors. The College was to be maintained by the savings made by the abolition of the Native Medical Institution and the Medical classes of the Sanskrit College and the Madrasa.¹⁵ This was followed by the establishment of a Medical College at Bombay in 1845.¹⁶ Thus was introduced in the year 1835, for the first time in India, a branch of "useful sciences", anatomy, the introduction of which had been dreamt by Rammohan Roy more than a decade ago.

12. For Macaulay, see G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* in 2 vols.
13. See Sharp, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 107 *et seq.* Macaulay's other minutes on education had been collected by H. Woodrow and published at Calcutta in 1862.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-1.
15. D. P. Sinha, *The Educational Policy of the East India in Bengal*, pp. 172-3.
16. For details about the records leading to the beginning of medical education in the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, see Chapter VIII in J. Richey, eds, *Selections from Educational Records*, II pp. 312-38.

II

Science and technology can only develop when there exist conditions for it. And such conditions were created in India when Dalhousie was appointed Governor-General in 1848 though the creation of the Department of Public Works had already led a year ago to the establishment of the first Civil Engineering College at Roorkee with Lieutenant R. Maclagan as its principal to give theoretical and practical introduction in Civil Engineering to Europeans and Indians. A firm believer in utilitarian philosophy, Dalhousie was an interesting example of eighteenth century benevolent despotism in Europe. For the good and the happiness of the people of India, as he frequently observed in many of his minutes which now comprise more than 600 bulky volumes at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, he undertook many public works including construction of roads and irrigation projects.¹⁷ Dalhousie thought of attaching a civil engineering class to each one of the three colleges in the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras to annually instruct a number of young men to fill vacancies as they arose, and to meet the increasing demands of the department of public works. In 1853, Bengal was placed under a Lieutenant Governor and Public Works Departments were also organized in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. This led to a great demand for civil engineers which the Civil Engineering College at Roorkee was unable to meet. This situation further worsened when the Court of Directors sanctioned Dalhousie's scheme for railways in India in August, 1853. The railways in India were not only to serve imperial purposes, including the opening of "the cotton growing districts" of Bombay to the cotton manufacturers of Manchester, but also to herald the dawn of a technological era in India. Three railway companies—the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company, the East Indian Railway Company and the Central Indian Railway Company—began their work according to the Dalhousie's plan of binding India by

17. For details about these, see Suresh Chandra Ghosh, "The Utilitarianism of Dalhousie and the Material Improvement of India" in Gordon Johnson, ed., *Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge, February, 1978, Vol. 12, Part 1, pp. 97-110.

iron chains and by April, 1853, the experimental line from Bombay to Thane—the first railway in Asia, not to speak of India—was opened to the public before a crowd of “hundreds of thousands of people”.¹⁸ The same year also saw the introduction of another Western innovation in India—the electric telegraph. In this matter Dalhousie who visualised the introduction of electric telegraph as a “vast public and commercial boon” and politically “of vital consequence to this country” was greatly helped by Dr. W. O’Shaughnessy whose name we have already come across in connection with the Medical College at Calcutta. Just as railways had led to a creation of a department under Major Kennedy, the introduction of the electric telegraph also resulted in the organization of a department by Dalhousie for it. The head of this department was to be a superintendent and he named O’Shaughnessy for the post.¹⁹

Both the railways and the electric telegraph created a demand for technical hands—masons, carpenters, smiths, signallers—undreamt of before 1848. The demand for civil engineers was so great that Dalhousie transferred his earlier idea of establishing a civil engineering class to that of a civil engineering college in each of the three Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The primary object of such a college should be the training of civil engineers employed in the departments of public works, railways and electric telegraph and the college should be open to all alike, Europeans, Eurasians and Indians. No doubt the Thomason College at Roorkee had been doing a lot in this direction but a great deal was yet to be done and one college was not sufficient. More so, because the means of instruction for the lower grades of persons employed in the departments of public works were not supplied by the system of the Thomason College—these were supplied by the school founded by Major Maitland in the Madras Presidency. Dalhousie therefore suggested that the proposed Civil Engineering College in Bengal should be based on the model of major Maitland’s school in Madras in its junior department and on that of Thomason College at Roorkee in its senior department.

18. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Dalhousie in India, 1848-56*, Chapter IV, pp. 57-92.

19. *Ibid.*, Chapter V, pp. 93-126.

He asked the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to submit details about such a scheme.²⁰

Dalhousie's concern for technological education—preparing Indians in science and industry for the coming modern world—was adequately shared by the Education Despatch of 1854, introducing an education system²¹ which basically survives till today. Paragraph 80 of the Despatch observed on the subject of technical education : “The success of the Thomason College of Civil Engineering at Roorkee has shown that, for the purpose of training up persons capable of carrying out the great works which are in progress under Government throughout India, and to qualify the natives of India for the exercise of a profession which, now that the system of railways and public works is being rapidly extended, will afford an opening for a very large number of persons, it is expedient that similar places for practical institution in civil engineering should be established in other parts of India, and especially in the Presidency of Madras, where works of irrigation are so essential, not only to the posterity of the country, but to the very existence of the people in times of drought and scarcity. The subject has been prominently brought under your notice in the recent reports of the Public Works Commissioners for the different presidencies, and we trust that immediate measures will be taken to supply a deficiency which is at present but too apparent.”²² In this context the Despatch also appreciated the work done by the School of Art and Design set up by Dr. Hunter in Madras and promised grants-in-aid to the one contemplated to be set up in Bombay by Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, and greatly commended the decision of the Council of Education in Calcutta of attaching to each zillah school the means of teaching practical agricultures for, as Dr. Mouat, the Secretary to the Council, had truly observed, there was “no single advantage that could be afforded to the vast rural population of India

20. See Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *Dalhousie in India, 1848-57*, Chapter II, p. 14 *et seq.*
21. For a critical analysis of the Education Despatch including its origin and development, see Suresh Chandra Ghosh, “Dalhousie, Charles Wood and the Education Despatch of 18 in Charles Webster, ed., *History of Education*, London, 1975, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 37-48.
22. J. Richey, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, 1840-59*, II, p. 387.

that would equal the introduction of an improved system of agriculture".²³

III

In 1858, power was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown²⁴ as a result of the Revolt of the Sepoys which swept the Indian sky in 1857.²⁵ But the hopes raised by the Dalhousie era as well as the Education Despatch of 1854 for any further development of science and technological education in India were belied in the subsequent years. One condition for their development would have been to expand the existing industries—cotton and jute mills, sugar and tea plantations, certain coal mines and iron foundries which were then controlled by the British capital.²⁶ However, this was not to be because the British Crown was really a successor to a mercantile company and this largely explains why the introduction of railways in India, unlike in other countries in Europe and America, was not accompanied by any industrial development.²⁷ Since the coming of the railways to India, it was largely and increasingly seen as a supplier of raw materials to British manufacturers and as a market for their own finished products. While this view of India led to an expansion of British manufacturing industries and scientific and technological knowledge at home, in India, it led to a crippling of cottage industries and a decline in indigenous skill. Whatever, scientific and technological expertise was needed to run the existing industries in jute, cotton and tea was obtained from England and there was, therefore, simply no local demand for specialised technical knowledge in these areas. Consequently no further development in

23. J. Richey, ed., *Selections from Educational Records, 1840-59*, II, pp. 387-8.

24. The constitutional aspect of the transfer of power may be seen in C. Ilbert, *The Government of India, a Historical Survey* and A. B. Keith, *Constitutional History of India*.

25. A standard reassessment of the Mutiny was made by S. N. Sen in 1957 in his 1857. In the same year also, appeared R. C. Majumdar's *The Sepoy Mutiny and Revolt of 1857* which uses many new materials in dealing with certain episodes.

26. See L. H. Jenks, *The Migration of British Capital to 1875*, pp. 26-7.

27. B. N. Ganguli, *Dadabhai Nawroji and the Drain Theory*, p. 27.

scientific and technological education took place. In a Resolution of 18 June, 1888, the British *Raj* clarified its policy : "In India at the present time the application of capital to industry has not been developed to the extent which in European countries has rendered the establishment of technical schools on a large scale an essential requisite of success. But the extension of railways, the introduction of mills and factories, the expansion of external trade and enlarged intercourse with foreign markets, ought in time to lead to the same results in India as in other countries, and create a demand for educated foremen, supervisors and managers. It may be conceded that the effect of these various influences on an Asiatic people is very gradual, and that it would be premature to establish technical schools on such a scale as in European countries and thereby aggravate the present difficulties by adding to the unemployed a new class of professional men for whom there is no commercial demand."²⁸

IV

The problem of unemployment by the end of 1880s, referred to in the *Raj's* Resolution on Technical Education above, was the result of an expansion of higher education in liberal arts by leaps and bounds since the days of the Education Despatch of 1854. As per the provision of the Despatch, universities were set up at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. These universities were not actually teaching ones, and based as they were on the London model, they merely served as examination bodies.²⁹ They were fed by a number of colleges which actually did the teaching, and with the exception of 3 colleges each in Civil Engineering and Medicine, all the 85 colleges by 1882 were teaching courses in liberal arts leading to Matriculation, F. A., B. A., Honours & M. A. and qualification in Law. By 1883, out of an estimated population of 250,000,000 in British India, some 25,000 had received their higher education in liberal

28. *Papers Relating to Technical Education in India, 1886-1904*, p. 36 and K. D. Bhargava, ed., *Selections from Educational Records*, IV, p. 86.

29. For details, see *Papers Connected with the Establishment of Universities in India*.

arts while the number of those receiving training in medicine and civil engineering together fell well below the seven hundred mark.³⁰

What was the prospect open to the large number of students who did not receive any training in civil engineering and medicine ? For one thing a career in India was never virtually open to talent though the principle had been asserted time and again in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 after the Mutiny to allay fear, suspicion and distrust. Again some avenues like army and politics were closed altogether. In those days agriculture offered little incentive and so did manufacturing and commerce for the latter was almost impossible without the skill, capital and equality of terms with which it could compete with European industry. As a matter of fact, the very nature of the courses with their unique and disproportionate attention to literature and philosophy compared with physical and cognate branches of practical instruction tended to limit the choice of a career to either government service or analogous employment. "What else can he do but qualify himself", lamented a Calcutta Newspaper,³¹ "or if he is father, train his son for the public service or one of the learned professions" ? While it was not easy for them to enter the Covenanted Civil Services thrown open to the educated young Indians since 1853, little more than one third of the graduates were able to enter the lower levels of the government services. And most of them, except those who took to law, teaching and journalism, remained unemployed and therefore discontented. Discontent among the educated unemployed gave rise to militant nationalism threatening the very existence of the British Empire in India. Higher education in India was singled out as the root of all evil : "When Erasmuns was reproached with having laid the egg from which come forth the Reformation, 'yes', he replied ; but I laid a hen's egg and Luther had hatched a fighting cock."³² It was thought necessary to

30. Appendix M. Statements 3 and 4 in *Report of the Public Service Commission, 1886-87*, pp. 81-2.

31. *Indian Mirror*, Calcutta, 13 February, 1878.

32. Quoted in Curzon's inaugural speech at the First Educational Conference at Simla in *Home Education A Proceedings*, October, 1901, No. 19, Appendix A, p. 12.

curb the growth of militant nationalism by controlling "the Educational Juggernaut"³³ and this was done by Curzon in 1904 by passing the Indian Universities Act which was based on the recommendations of the Indian Universities Commission of 1902.

While the various recommendations of the Commission to enable the *Raj* to control higher education in India are not strictly relevant here, some at least relating to the creation of new courses in science are important. The Commission for the first time suggested the creation of the Faculty of Science in addition to the existing four Faculties of Arts, Law, Medicine and Civil Engineering and suggested the following subjects for the science courses :

B. Sc. Course

One of the following groups of subjects :

1. Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry,
2. Physics, Chemistry and Natural Science.

M. Sc. Course

Any one of the subjects included in the B. Sc. Course.

The Commission also recommended the award of the degree of Doctor of Science to be given to a Master of Science after some years spent in original investigation.³⁴ The Government Education Resolution of 1904, a few days before the passing of the Indian Universities Act, emphasised the need for the "maintenance and further development" of the technological institutes which fed the Faculties of Engineering at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. For this purpose fresh efforts towards the development of Indian industries in which indigenous capital could be invested as well as the expansion of the existing Indian markets by creating new export trades were to be made. As a first step towards providing men qualified to take a leading part in the improvement of Indian industries, the Government of India decided to give assistance in the form of scholarships to selected students to enable them to pursue a course of technical education under supervision in Europe or America.³⁵

33. G. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, 1, p. 278.

34. For details, see *Report of the Indian Universities Commission, 1902*, in 2 Vols.

35. *Indian Educational Policy*, pp. 33-34.

In this context it indicated a great deficiency in agricultural technology for a country like India where two-thirds of the population were dependent for their livelihood on the produce of the soil. There was no institution capable of imparting "a complete agricultural education. The existing schools and colleges ... have neither produced scientific experts, nor succeeded in attracting members of the landholding classes to qualify themselves as practical agriculturists". The Resolution spoke of a scheme to supply this want by the establishment of an Imperial Agricultural College in connection with an Experimental Farm and Research Laboratory under the supervision of the Inspector General of Agricultural Science combined with constant practice in farm work and estate management.³⁶

However, post-graduate studies in science and technology did not take off seriously till the appointment of the Calcutta University Commission in 1917. It recommended the two Medical Colleges at Calcutta to be constituent colleges of the University and visualized the training of skilled engineers as one of the most important services which the universities would have to render in an industrial society. It recommended the Civil Engineering College at Sibpur to be a constituent college of the University. The College was to train students not only in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering but also to offer courses on Mining and Architecture. Finally, the Commission recommended the training of students for a commercial career and the creation of a School of Agriculture.³⁷ These recommendations of the Calcutta University Commission were to have a far reaching impact in moulding the science and engineering departments in universities in the near and remote future.

V

The first two decades of the present century which saw an intensification of the struggle for freedom since the partition of Bengal in 1905,³⁸ also saw the beginning of the researches in

36. *Indian Educational Policy*, pp. 39-41.

37. For details, see *Report of the Calcutta University Commission, 1917-19*, in 13 Vols.

38. For a bird's eye view, see Percival Spear *The Oxford History of Modern India*, p. 314 *et seq.*

science and technology by the Indians. Long before the establishment of post-graduate teaching departments in some of the universities, for which the lead was given by the Calcutta University of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, some of the premier affiliated colleges did have science departments. The Presidency College in Calcutta, for example, was the scene of important researches by J. C. Bose in plant sciences, which won international recognition, and P. C. Roy in chemistry. Both had their training abroad. In the 1920s, which saw the start of Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and appointment of Simon Commission in 1927 to review the progress achieved on the basis of the reforms of Montagu-Chelmsford, many distinguished scientists began their work at Calcutta. Among them were Meghanad Saha and C. V. Raman.³⁹ Raman later received the prestigious Nobel Prize for his work in Physics in 1930. But these works were all but isolated attempts and as yet there had been no systematic development of science and technology at the higher education level. However, a plan for such development was mooted for the first time in 1943 when the British *Raj*, as a part of its plan for Post-War Development in India, asked the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) to prepare a comprehensive plan in education. Sir John Sargent, then the Education Adviser to the Government of India, was entrusted with the task. Sargent submitted a memorandum to the CABE which accepted and published it under the title : *Post-War Educational Development in India*. The *Report*, though a patchwork of different reports published from time to time by the CABE to consider different aspects of Indian educational problem, made constructive suggestions regarding the development of science and technology in India from the grassroots level. It suggested high school education for six years for selected children between the age of 11 and 17. The high schools were to be of two types—Academic High School providing instructions in Arts and Pure Sciences and Technical High Schools, specialising in applied sciences and also in industrial and commercial subjects. The requirements of industry and commerce would determine the size and location of each type

39. See Appendix 2 in *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, p. 449 et seq.

of institution to a large extent. However, before any steps could be taken to implement this programme, the British *Raj* had to leave India in 1947.

V I

It will be seen from the above that science and technology could not develop a programme in higher education in India under the British *Raj* as it had done in countries in the West. This backwardness in this area, as in the other fields of education, had been tacitly admitted by John Sargent in 1944 when his *Report on Post-War Plan for Educational Development* aimed to achieve the educational standard of contemporary England within 40 years.⁴⁰ The obvious explanation as to why the courses in science and technology did not develop was that the *Raj* was not interested in creating conditions for such development. Courses in civil engineering were introduced when in the middle of the nineteenth century the *Raj* created conditions for their development by introducing railways and telegraph in India.⁴¹ Such conditions were not created later in other areas by the *Raj*. In the name of industry India primarily had cotton, textile, jute and sugar and until after World War II these were completely unprotected against indiscriminate competition from imports. The capital goods sector with the sole exception of Tata Iron and Steel Company (1907) consisted merely of small iron foundries, loco repair shops and the like. Any meaningful diversification of the industrial sector had to wait until World War II when cessation of supplies from Britain gave fillip to the indigenous industry. Secondly, the Indian people themselves did not take much interest in this practical aspect of higher education because of social, religious and other barriers in many cases. They were more interested in going through a course of higher education in liberal arts to get a position, however, humble it could be, in a *Raj* establishment rather than risk their future in a professional career in a non-government establishment. "Government service is regarded by the educated classes", so commented the first Educational Resolu-

40. *Post-War Educational Development in India*, pp. 32-3.

41. See above.

tion of the British *Raj*, "as the most assured, the most dignified, and the most attractive of all careers".⁴² Thirdly, the emergence of Indian nationalism and the beginning of the struggle for freedom since 1885, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the great depression of 1929 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 ... all contributed their mite to the slow development of a programme on science and technology in higher education. When the *Raj* left the shores of India, India had 20 universities, many of them without any science department and those which had them were without any funds for post-graduate research in science. The number of institutions offering post-graduate courses in engineering were five only though the total number of Medical Colleges was 22.⁴³

If higher education failed to include any comprehensive programme in science and technology, it was the activities of a group of Europeans in the services of the Company and the Crown who took an interest in the subject as their spare time activity and did much for its development in India. They were responsible for publishing considerable literature on science and technology, building a sizeable store of scientific apparatus, chemicals and research tools and founded a few of the important scientific institutions in the country. The beginning was made by William Jones in 1783-84 when he set up the Asiatic Society, to investigate into the science of Asia,⁴⁴ and since then similar societies had emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which built up great reputation in investigative researches in science and technology. While, by the end of the nineteenth century the number of such societies had been 4 in number including two in engineering and technological sciences, by 1940, there were 38 including 12 in the engineering and technological sciences.⁴⁵ However, they had little impact, if any, in affecting higher education in the country before 1947.

42. *Indian Education Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

43. This information is obtained from the Table 4 in the 66th Presidential Address of the Indian Science Congress published in *Commerce*, Bombay, 1978, CXXXVII, No. 3526, 13.

44. Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal, 1757-1800*, pp. 166-7.

45. This information is obtained from A. Rahman *et al.*, *Scientific Societies in India*, Survey Report No. 5.

The 1986 National Policy on Education*

In January, 1985, the Government of India announced that "a New Education Policy" would be formulated soon. In August, 1985, after making careful assessment of the existing developments, the proposals were submitted to the public for a country-wide debate and discussion.¹ In May, 1986, emerged the National Policy on Education after its approval by Parliament.²

The document on the National Policy on Education is divided into twelve parts. After some preliminary observations in the first two parts, it discusses in some detail about some of the

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1. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, *Challenge of Education—a policy perspective*, New Delhi, 19 August, 1985.
2. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, *National Policy on Education-1986*, New Delhi, May, 1986.

essential characteristics of a national system of education providing opportunities for equal access to education to all, irrespective of class, caste, creed or sex and areas including backward, hilly and desert. It envisages a common educational structure like 10+2+3, a common core in the curricular programme at some level, an understanding of the diverse socio-cultural systems of the people while motivating the younger generations for international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.³

"The New Policy" therefore stresses the need for removal of disparities and emphasises the steps to be taken to equalise educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far—women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the handicapped and some minority groups who are either educationally deprived or backward. People belonging to rural areas, hill and desert districts, remote and inaccessible areas and islands need special care and incentives. "The whole Nation", observes the National Policy on Education, "must pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age group".⁴ The document seeks to organise programmes on adult education linked with national goals to enable the beneficiaries to participate in the developmental programmes of the country.

While the local community will be fully involved in early childhood care and education, "the new thrust" in elementary education will be in (a) universal enrolment and retention upto 14 years and (b) attempt to substantially improve the quality of education. This effort will be fully coordinated with the network of non-formal system so that by 1990 all children attaining the age of 11 years will have had five years of schooling and by 1995 all children up to 14 years of age will be provided free and compulsory education. In secondary education talented children should be provided opportunities to proceed at a faster pace by means of pace-setting schools with full scope for innovation and experimentation. Courses on vocational education will ordinarily be provided after the secondary stage, but keeping the scheme flexible, these may also be made available after class VIII. Vocational education will be a distinct stream, intended

3. *National Policy on Education*—1986, p. 3 *et seq.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

to prepare students for identified occupations spanning several areas of activity. By 1990 vocational courses should cover 10 per cent and by 1995, 25 per cent of the higher secondary students. In higher education the most urgent need is "to protect the system" consisting of 150 universities and 5000 colleges from "degradation". Autonomous colleges will be developed to gradually replace the affiliating system while the creation of autonomous departments within universities on a selective basis will be encouraged. Research in Science and Technology and interdisciplinary research in Social Sciences as well as setting up of national research facilities with proper forms of autonomous management will be encouraged. The Open University system will be initiated in order to augment opportunities for higher education while a Rural University to transform rural India on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary ideas on education will be set up. Technical and Management Education curricula will be targetted on current as well as the projected needs of industry or user system and will relate to the changes in the economy, social environment, and knowledge. Delinking degrees from jobs will be made in selected areas where candidates despite being equipped for a given job are unable to get it because of an unnecessary preference for graduate candidates.⁵

The document makes a series of observations on cultural perspective, value education, languages, books and libraries, media and educational technology, work experience, education and environment, mathematics teaching, science education, sports and physical education, the role of youth and proposes to recast the examination system so as to ensure a method of assessment that is a valid and reliable measure of student development and a powerful instrument for teaching and learning.⁶ Since these and many other "new tasks" of education cannot be performed in "a state of disorder" the first task is to make the system "work". "All teachers should teach and all students study".⁷ The strategy of the New Education Policy in this respect consists of (a) better deal to teachers with greater

5. *National Policy on Education—1986*, p. 10 *et seq.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 20 *et seq.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

accountability ; (b) provision of improved students' services and insistence on observance of acceptable norms of behaviour ; (c) provision of better facilities to institutions ; and (d) creation of a system of performance appraisals of institutions according to standards and norms set at the National or State levels.⁸

How is this system going to be managed ? Since education is a Concurrent Subject now as per the Constitutional Amendment of 1976, it is expected a meaningful partnership will be ensued between the States and the Union Government in managing it. The guiding considerations will be (a) evolving a long term planning and management perspective of education and its integration with the country's developmental and manpower needs ; (b) decentralisation and the creation of a spirit of autonomy for educational institutions ; (c) giving pre-eminence to people's involvement, including association of non-government agencies and voluntary effort ; (d) inducting more women in the planning and management of education and finally (e) establishing the principle of accountability in relation to given objectives and norms.⁹ As far as the financial aspect of the system is concerned, the Government proposes to gradually increase the expenditure on education till it "uniformly exceeds to 6 per cent of the National Income". Additional sources, to the extent possible, will be raised partly by mobilising donations from the beneficiary communities and partly by raising fees at the higher levels of education while effecting some saving by the efficient use of facilities. And finally, implementation of the various parameters of "the New Policy" will be reviewed "every five years".¹⁰

Reviewing of education policy "every five years" was a decision taken by the British Government as a sequel to the *Report of the Indian Education Commission* in 1882 and was first implemented in 1886,¹¹ exactly hundred years ago from the date of the promulgation of the New Education Policy. While this aspect of the New Education Policy is not certainly new, the question may now be asked how new are the contents

8. *National Policy on Education*—1986, p. 20.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 28, *et seq.*

11. See S. C. Ghosh, *Indian Nationalism*, p. 183.

of the New Education Policy ? The answer to the question can only be provided by reviewing the past developments in education and for this purpose we need not go beyond 1947—the year when India achieved her Independence. India's education policy, immediately after her independence, was based on the structure provided by Sir John Sargent, Education Adviser to the British Government, in his *Post-War Plan of Educational Development in India in 1944*. The object of the Plan was to achieve for India in 1984 the same educational standard as it had then existed in England. It provided for the liquidation of illiteracy, universal elementary education and higher education for one student out of every 20 that completed the secondary school and a certain amount of vocational, technical and professional education. It also provided for compulsory physical education, milk and mid-day meals for undernourished children and special education for the physically and mentally handicapped.¹²

However, within three years after the Sargent Plan, India earned her freedom and the people were in no mood to accept a system of a highly selected secondary and higher education as well as the long period of 40 years for its implementation. In January, 1948 in his inaugural address to the All India Educational Conference convened by the Union Education Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, observed : “Whenever conferences were called to form a plan for education in India, the tendency, as a rule, was to maintain the existing system with slight modifications. This must not happen now. Great changes have taken place in the country and the educational system must also be in keeping with them. The entire basis of education must be revolutionised.”¹³

Nehru's observation was quite in keeping with the force of the time which saw emergent nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America preoccupied with the task of renovating their educational structures to suit national needs and national aspirations. But the promised revolution in education system in India was not so easy to materialise. India after independence

12. John Sargent, *Post-War Plan of Educational Development in India, 1944-1984*. New Delhi, 1944.

13. S. Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 5, p. 407.

was plagued with a host of pressing problems. The Partition had brought to India refugees from East and West Pakistan—they had to be rehabilitated. The Princely States had to be integrated with the Indian Union. The bureaucracy and the army had to be reorganised as the departure of British officials had left these services depleted. India had to be granted a constitution and made a republic. Plans had to be drawn up for developing the country. In the midst of all these the utmost that could be done in education was to appoint in 1948 a University Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan as reconstruction of university education was thought to be essential to meet the demand for scientific, technical and other manpower needed for the socio-economic development of the country.

The recommendations of the Commission in 1949 were wide — covering all aspects of university education in India. They emphasised the 10+2 structure at the pre-university stage, correction of the “extreme specialisation” in the courses, development of research to advance the frontiers of knowledge and of professional education in agriculture, commerce, law, medicine, education, science and technology including certain new areas such as business and public administrations and industrial relations and suggested reform of the examination system by assessment of the student’s work throughout the year and introduction of courses on the central problems of the philosophy of religion. They also emphasised the importance of student’s welfare by means of scholarships and stipends, hostel, library and medical facilities and suggested that they should be familiar with three languages—the regional, federal and English—at the university stage and that English be replaced as early as possible by an Indian language. The Commission was also seized with the idea of setting up of rural universities to meet the need of rural reconstruction in industry, agriculture and various walks of life. The universities should be constituted as autonomous bodies to meet the new responsibilities, a Central University Grants Commission be established for allocating grants and finally university education be placed in the Concurrent List.¹⁴

14. See *Report of the Radhakrishnan Commission*, New Delhi, 1949.

One of the most significant recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission was on the reorganisation of secondary education as a prerequisite condition for the development of university education and so in 1952 the Secondary Education Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. L. Mudaliar. The Commission which submitted its report in 1953 reduced the total duration of the school course from 12 to 11 years and transferred the control of secondary school leaving examination from the universities to the specially constituted Boards of Secondary Education. While developing the curricula of the higher secondary course, the Commission sought to diversify it by the establishment of Multipurpose Schools which would provide terminal courses in technology, commerce, agriculture, fine arts and home science. The obvious object was to divert students from university education into different walks of life according to their aptitudes and capabilities.¹⁵

It is clear from the above that the Mudaliar Commission as well as the Radhakrishnan Commission which met before it, dealt exclusively with two areas of education in which the ruling *e'lite* groups were interested. Both these sections received large allocations of funds¹⁶ and underwent rapid, unplanned and uncontrolled expansion, resulting in deterioration of standards and creation of severe problems of educated unemployment. On the other hand, the programmes of adult education and liquidation of illiteracy continued to be neglected as in the past. In elementary education the evils of wastage and stagnation continued unabated as no structural changes like multiple-entry or part-time education were introduced. A perfunctory attempt at introducing basic education on Gandhian ideas was made but it was not successful and practically given up soon. In the context of all these developments, the constitutional provision of free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years of age by 1960 seemed a distant dream now.

15. See *Report of the Mudaliar Commission*, New Delhi, 1953.

16. For details about expenditure in education in the successive Five-Year Plans, see Table III C in J. P. Naik, *Some Aspects of Post-Independence Development in India*, pp. 60-61.

It is also clear from the earlier developments in education that the country was only interested in retaining the colonial set-up and was mostly engaged in dealing with education in a piece-meal fashion. The vision of a national system of education seen in 1947 thus got blurred within two decades. Yet, the demand by the electorates for such a system continued to be made so persistently that in 1964, M. C. Chagla, the Union Education Minister appointed the Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari, to advise the Government on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all its aspects so that a national system of education could emerge.

In 1966, the Commission in its voluminous report suggested a drastic reconstruction, almost a revolution in education to meet the problems facing the country in different sectors. It suggested an internal transformation in education to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people, a qualitative improvement to raise its standards and a quantitative expansion of educational facilities on the basis of manpower needs and equalization of educational opportunities. The internal transformation could be achieved by making science education an integral part of all school education and improving its teaching at the university stage. Similarly work experience should be an integral part of all general education. Vocational education was emphasised both at the lower (11-16 years) and the higher (17-18 years) secondary stage while in higher education about one-third of the total enrolment was expected to be in vocational courses. A common school system with equality of access to children from all social strata was suggested and some form of social service by students at all stages was made obligatory. Development of fundamental social, moral and spiritual values including a provision for giving some instruction about the different religions was emphasised. National consciousness as well as a sense of belonging to the country was sought to be promoted through the adoption of a curricular programme which was both dynamic and elastic at all stages. While retaining the three language formula of the Radhakrishnan Commission with some modifications, the Kothari Commission recommended the development of all modern Indian languages for use in

education as well as in administration in their respective States. While all the three languages should be studied at the lower, only two of these will be compulsory at the higher secondary stage.

The qualitative improvement could be achieved by a maximum utilisation of the existing facilities. Since resources for upgrading all the institutions were not available, the Commission suggested that at least ten per cent of them should be upgraded to adequate standards during the next ten years—the model would be one secondary school in every community development block, one college in each district and five or six universities at the national level. The Commission accepted 10+2 at the secondary and the higher secondary stage followed by a first degree course of a duration of not less than three years. The Commission also made various recommendations including uniform pay-scales to improve the service conditions of teachers so that the best persons coming out from the education system could be attracted to teaching. The Commission felt the education facilities could be expanded on a selective basis at the secondary and the higher secondary stage while effective primary education should be provided to all. Adult illiteracy should be liquidated on a mass or selected scale and part-time courses of about one years' duration for the drop-outs in the 11-14 age group. The Commission visualised that total enrolment would rise from 70 million in 1965 to 170 million in 1985, educational expenditure from Rs 6,000 million in 1965 to Rs. 47,000 million in 1985, representing an increase in the proportion of national income devoted to education from 2.9 per cent in 1965 to 6 per cent in 1985.¹⁷

Since education was then a State Subject, the usual procedure would have been to refer those recommendations concerning States to them, but the public demand for the education was so great that the Government of India decided to depart from the procedure earlier followed. After a wide circulation, through its own organs and the press, the Government referred them to a Committee of Members of Parliament for consideration. The recommendations along with the report of the Parliamentary

17. For details, see *Report of the Kothari Commission*, New Delhi, 1966, subsequently published as *Education and National Development*.

Committee were then discussed in both the Houses of Parliament, followed by a discussion in Cabinet. Out of these discussions emerged the first national policy in independent India in the form of a resolution on education in July, 1968.¹⁸ Needless to say, the recommendations of the Kothari Commission were progressively diluted at every stage of the discussions. Yet the policy that was born out of them remained the basic framework for all governmental action despite an attempt by the Janata Government to revise it in 1979 when it came to power in 1977¹⁹ till the coming of "the New Education Policy" in May, 1986.

How new is this New Education Policy ? It is interesting to note that the framers of the New Education Policy have never cared to answer this question. They have never bothered to explain anywhere in the long policy statement in what sense the present policy is new or how different it is from the 1968 policy resolution. A comparative study of the New Education Policy with that of the 1968 National Policy on Education reveals that the former has directly borrowed many of its ideas from the recommendations of the Kothari Commission which provided the basis for the 1968 National Policy on Education. In some places there is also direct acknowledgement of its indebtedness to the 1968 policy. For example, on the subject of the languages, which always remains one of the most sensitive issues in any education policy in India, the New Education Policy observes : "The Education Policy of 1968 had examined the question of the development of languages in great detail ; its essential provision can hardly be improved upon and are as relevant as today."²⁰ Similarly on the subject of raising resources or making investments in education, the New Education Policy says : "The National Policy on Education, 1968, had laid down that investment on education be gradually increased to reach a level of expenditure of 6 per cent of the National income as early as possible ... It will be ensured that from the

18. J. P. Naik, *The Education Commission and After*, pp. 39-44.

19. *Ibid.*, Appendix III, pp. 213-26.

20. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, *National Policy on Education—1986*, p. 21.

Eighth Five-Year Plan onwards it will uniformly exceed to 6 per cent of the National Income.”²¹

The New Education Policy thus does not appear to be new in many aspects of its policy. Its indebtedness goes beyond the 1968 National Policy on Education ; as for example, the idea of setting up rural universities is directly taken from the Radhakrishnan Commission of 1948-49.²² It may be mentioned here that the subject of Model School or pace-setting school of the New Education Policy which has been seen as undesirably favouring a privileged few against many students by its critiques is not a new concept at all. The idea of Model School is older than the Education system itself which emerged in Modern India in 1854. It is an idea which first found favour with James Thomason, the Lt. Governor of the North-Western Provinces, in 1849, when he decided to introduce a scheme of vernacular education by means of a school in every village and every district to remove the appalling ignorance of the people in understanding the new revenue settlement in the North-Western Provinces. The scheme was successful—it was extended to the rest of British India before it finally became a part of the plan of the Education Despatch of 1854.²³ Similarly the idea of autonomous colleges which has been in the air since the days of the Kothari Commission and is now an important aspect of the new policy, is also older than the structure of the Indian education system itself. Colleges like the Hindu College, Sanskrit College, Agra College, Delhi College and the Presidency College which grew out of the Senior Department of the Hindu College in 1853 were all autonomous colleges. They were brought under the jurisdiction of the Education Department which emerged in 1855²⁴ and were later affiliated with the three universities that came into existence at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857.²⁵

21. *National Policy on Education*—1986, p. 29.

22. See above.

23. See S. C. Ghosh, *Dalhousie in India, 1848-56*, p. 3 *et seq.*

24. J. P. Naik and S. C. Ghosh, eds., *Development of Educational Service, 1855-79*, Introduction.

25. See *Papers Connected with the Establishment of Universities in India, 1857*, Calcutta, 1857.

◊ If the New Education Policy is not “new” in themes and ideas, it is certainly “new” in the emphasis it has placed on its implementation and the directions it has issued for the purpose. Immediately after its approval in the Budget Session in 1986, a *Programme of Action* was prepared and presented for approval in the Monsoon Session of the Parliament. The 1968 National Policy on Education was taken so half-heartedly and its implementation was made so casually that a decade after the policy had been promulgated, J. P. Naik, a Member-Secretary of the Kothari Commission, was led to remark : “The stresses and strains of the [education] system have continued to grow so that the educational scene in the country in 1978 is not certainly better and is probably a little more complicated and difficult than in 1966.”²⁶ It is also new in the way it has emerged. The 1968 policy was based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission which took nearly two years to finalise them. Whereas the formulation of the proposals of the New Education Policy was not preceded by the appointment of an expert commission on the subject, the proposals were formulated by the concerned Ministry officials under guidance from the ruling party immediately after its coming to power in December 1984/January, 1985 with a massive majority in Parliament. They were ready by August, 1985 and were then submitted to the politicians, academicians and administrators for their reactions. Out of the discussions that followed the final policy emerged in May, 1986—the shortest possible time that has ever gone into the making of a policy in education while the first announcement of such a policy on the subject, Indian Educational Policy, in March, 1904, took nearly three years after the proposals were first mooted in a secret conference at Simla in September, 1901.²⁷

There is always a secret part to the making of a policy and since the secret files of the Government are not open to us, it is difficult to say at this stage how the proposals for the New Education Policy came to be formulated. Yet from a study

26. Observation made in 1978 in a mimeographed paper, copy of which presented to me, on “The Enunciation of the National Policy on Education” by Shri J. P. Naik, p. 55.

27. See S. C. Ghosh, *Indian Nationalism*, for details.

of the developments that had taken place in India in the last three decades as well as from a careful study of some of the observations made in the 1986 policy documents, it is possible to guess that the reasons for promulgating the New Education Policy are more political than educational. In the past few decades the education scene has been in turmoil in most of the developing countries which have recently emerged independent but in India it has a peculiar dimension because of the vastness of the country with a huge, almost exploding population now, who speak different languages, follow different religions and cultures, and practise different social norms and behaviours. Since early 1950s a Planning Commission has been set up to chalk out a planned development of India and education has become a part of the planned programme. Unfortunately it has not received the attention it deserves "whether in absolute terms or relatively to investment in other sectors,"²⁸ and the Planning Commission has never bothered to develop educational programmes after a careful assessment of the educational needs of the country. Since education is a catalyst in one's development, everybody asks for it and the political party which seeks its mandate from the public to rule has normally accepted such demand. The result is, within three decades after independence, we have a tremendous but unplanned expansion of education, particularly in higher education which is too academic in nature. For example, in 1947, there were only 19 universities, 277 Arts and Science Colleges, 199 Intermediate Colleges and 140 colleges of professional and technical education—in 1974, there were 100 universities and about 4000 colleges. The enrolments in higher education which stood at 2.5 lakhs in 1947 were now estimated at 34 lakhs.²⁹

What was the prospect open to these educated young men and women whose parents made investment in their education? The Indian economy did not in those years expand sufficiently to absorb the output of an unplanned expansion in education. Most of them remained unemployed or under-employed. In

28. Total educational expenditures represented about 3 per cent of the national income in 1974. See J. P. Naik, *Policy and Performance in Indian Education*, (1947-74).

29. J. P. Naik and S. Nurullah, *A History of Education in India*, p. 434.

1974, the Register of the Directorate General of Employment and Training reveals that there were some 54.58 per cent educated unemployed at the Matriculation, 26.01 per cent at the Undergraduate, 17.87 per cent at the Graduate and 1.53 per cent at the Post-graduate levels. In other words out of a total population of nearly 600 million, approximately 4,174,000 remained unemployed.³⁰ Under employment and unemployment which may differ in their consequences for individuals have many social consequences in common, especially the monopolizing of issues of social conflict in the political arena. The incidence of unemployment among the educated added to the stresses of the society already suffering from communalism, casteism, linguism and sectionalism. What could be the attitude of these young educated unemployed towards the government that had helped them to get education but no employment after it? It is one of discontent, as Bacon's *Of Seditions and Troubles* observes that one of the chief causes of discontent is "when more are bred scholars than preferment can take off".³¹ This also saps student motivation, creates unrest on the campus, and leads to further deterioration of standards. As a matter of fact, higher education converts on a large scale, the uneducated underemployment or unemployment, which is mute, unorganised and without a nuisance value into educated, urban unemployment which is vocal and organised and has a great nuisance value.³²

And what could be the attitude of the government towards them? One which could possibly best be described in words used by Curzon in 1901 more than eighty years ago while commenting on the spread of English education in India since 1835: "When Erasmus was reproached with having laid the egg from which came forth the Reformation, 'Yes', he replied: "But I laid a hen's egg, and Luther had hatched a fighting cock".³³

It is not therefore surprising to see that the educated unemployed spilled into the political arena. Many regional

30. See the *Register of DGE & T*, New Delhi, for 1974.

31. Quoted in S. C. Ghosh, *Indian Nationalism*, p. 21.

32. J. P. Narayan, *Education for Our People*, p. 51.

33. See S. C. Ghosh, *Indian Nationalism*, p. 22.

political parties began to exploit the discontent of the educated unemployed against the government to strengthen their grip over the people, while leadership and recruits as cadre members of the Naxalities and other radical groups in Indian politics came largely from the ranks of the educated unemployed.³⁴ Until 1967, the Congress Party held power both at the Centre and in the States but since 1967, elections it not only began to loose its hold over the States, particularly in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Tripura, Andhra, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and Haryana but also mauled itself by a split in 1969. Also new political parties have emerged demanding the creation of separate states for them such as Uttarakhand in the Uttar Pradesh, Gorkhaland in West Bengal, and Jharkhand in parts of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh which have posed a serious challenge to the government at the Centre. However, it is the militants' demand in the Punjab of a State fully independent of India in the form of Khalistan that has taxed the nerves of the Centre to the utmost and the government has to pull all its resources to fight these forces of disintegration.³⁵ In all these developments where the involvement of the educated, both employed and unemployed has been quite large, there has been no evidence of patriotism, no sense of belonging to one country and even no recollection of the past sufferings and sacrifices of their ancestors for the freedom of the motherland. It seems they have not got the correct education since independence and the government therefore is determined to introduce an education policy which, while contributing to the national development, will rectify these defects. As the document on *National Policy on Education*, 1986 observes in the concluding part of its *Introductory* : "India's political and social life is passing through a phase which poses the danger of erosion to long-accepted values. The goals of secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics are coming under strain. The rural areas, with poor

34. See T. N. Dhar, A. S. and W. F. Ilchman, *Education and Employment in India*, p. 115.

35. Newspapers form the chief source for this information but for a consolidated account for a particular year see *Times of India Year Book* published at Bombay.

infrastructure and social services, will not get the benefit of trained and educated youth, unless rural-urban disparities are reduced and determined measures are taken to promote diversification and dispersal of employment opportunities. The growth of our population needs to be brought down significantly over the coming decades Besides, a variety of new challenges and social needs make it imperative for the Government to formulate and implement a New Education Policy for the country. Nothing short of this will meet the situation.”³⁶ The same sentiment is also echoed by *Programme of Action* when it observes : “Time is of essence, and unless we act now, we stand in the danger of once again missing the opportunity of education reform, so critical not only for the development of our nation, but for our very survival.”³⁷

What is the prospect of success for this new National Policy on Education ? In Part XII of the document it speaks highly of the prospect it visualises : “..... given our tradition which has almost always put a high premium on intellectual and spiritual attainment, we are bound to succeed in achieving our objectives.”³⁸ However, the success of such a scheme in a democratic country like India, with many political parties with different ideologies, assumes that all the political parties at least hold similar or common views on the subject of education. Unfortunately this is not the case and there is a feeling in the States with non-Congress governments that some of the programmes in the New Education Policy like Model Schools, Autonomous Colleges, Open University, De-linking degrees will further widen the gulf between the rich and the poor, the privileged few and the non-privileged many, the haves and the have-nots. Already some Marxist teachers organisations in India have begun to view the New Education Policy with suspicion and distrust. The recent month long university and college teachers’ strike on the subject of the revision of teachers’ salaries has further added cynicism to suspicion and distrust.

36. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, *National Policy on Education-1986*, pp. 2-3.
37. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India *Programme of Action*, p. IV.
38. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, *National Policy on Education-1986*, p. 29.

If the political parties in India fail to hold similar or common views on the New Education Policy, it still has chances of success provided the party that frames it rules both at the Centre and in the States and is assured of its return to power in the succeeding elections. But this is not only the case now as there are many non-Congress governments in the States but also seems to be a remote possibility. In the Assembly Elections between 1985-1986 non-Congress governments were returned to power in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tripura. In Tamil Nadu the Congress was able to share power with AIADMK but in Haryana, a traditional seat of power for the Congress, it was badly mauled by Devi Lal's Lok Dal. The corruption charges in the country's defence-deals involving high Congress dignitaries and government officials which have begun to surface in the media since June, 1987 has considerably eroded the image and credibility of the ruling party at the Centre and there are now frequent demands from the opposition parties for a Mid-term Poll.³⁹

In view of the facts stated above, the prospect of the New Education Policy does not appear to be very bright at the moment despite the fact the government is pumping huge amount of money in implementing some of its programmes like Operation Blackboards, Open University and teachers' training. The only way out seems to be a Central Act embodying all the proposals of the New Education Policy and binding upon all governments, present and future, both at the Centre and in the States. If this is not done immediately, the fate of the New Education Policy will not be much different from the 1968 National Policy on Education. Let us hope that Nostradamus' prediction about the end of the World by 1999⁴⁰ proves wrong and the New Education Policy 1986 helps us to land in India of the Twenty-first Century smoothly without any broken limbs !

39. Again newspapers for the past months in 1986-1987 form the chief source for this information.

40. For an interesting account of Michel De Nostradame, the sixteenth century French physician-astrologer, most of whose predictions have since come true, see Colin Wilson's *The Occult*.

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